ESCAPE

AND OTHER ESSAYS

ARTHUR CHRISTOPHER BENSON

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BY

ARTHUR CHRISTOPHER BENSON

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I love people that leave some traces of their journey behind them, and I have strength enough to advise you to do so while you can.—THOMAS GRAY.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I	ESCAPE	3
II	LITERATURE AND LIFE	25
III	THE NEW POETS	47
IV	WALT WHITMAN	63
V	CHARM	91
VI	SUNSET	115
VII	THE HOUSE OF PENGERSICK	129
VIII	VILLAGES	139
IX	DREAMS	153
X	THE VISITANT	175
XI	THAT OTHER ONE	187
XII	SCHOOLDAYS	201
XIII	AUTHORSHIP	229
XIV	HERB MOLY AND HEARTSEASE	253
XV	BEHOLD, THIS DREAMER COMETH	279

NOTE

I desire to record my obligations to the Editor of the *Century Magazine*, and to the Editor of the *Cornhill Magazine*, for their permission to include in this volume certain essays which appeared first in their pages.

A. C. B.

INTRODUCTION

1

I WALKED to-day down by the riverside. The Cam is a stream much slighted by the lover of wild and romantic scenery; and its chief merit, in the eyes of our boys, is that it approaches more nearly to a canal in its straightness and the deliberation of its slow lapse than many more famous floods — and is therefore more adapted for the manœuvers of eight-oared boats! But it is a beautiful place, I am sure; and my ghost will certainly walk there, "if our loves remain," as Browning says, both for the sake of old memories and for the love of its own sweet peaceableness. I passed out of the town, out of the straggling suburbs, away from tall, puffing chimneys, and under the clanking railway bridge; and then at once the scene opens, wide pasture-lands on either side, and rows of old willows, the gnarled trunks holding up their clustered rods. There on the other side of the stream rises the charming village of Fen Ditton, perched

on a low ridge near the water, with church and vicarage and irregular street, and the little red-gabled Hall looking over its barns and stacks. More and more willows, and then, lying back, an old grange, called Poplar Hall, among high-standing trees; and then a little weir, where the falling water makes a pleasant sound, and a black-timbered lock, with another old house near by, a secluded retreat for the bishops of Ely in medieval times. The bishop came thither by boat, no doubt, and abode there for a few quiet weeks, when the sun lay hot over the plain; and a little further down is a tiny village called Horningsea, with a battlemented church among orchards and thatched houses, with its own disused wharf — a place which gives me the sense of a bygone age as much as any hamlet I know. Then presently the interminable fen stretches for miles and miles in every direction; you can see, from the high green flood-banks of the river, the endless lines of watercourses and far-off clumps of trees leagues away, and perhaps the great tower of Ely, blue on the horizon, with the vast spacious sky over-arching all. If that is not a beautiful place in its width, its greenness, its unbroken silence, I do not know what beauty is!

Nothing that historians call an event has ever happened there. It is a place that has just drifted out of the old lagoon life of the past, the life of reed-beds and low-lying islands, of marsh-fowl and fishes, into a hardly less peaceful life of cornfield and pasture. No one goes there except on country business, no armies ever marshaled or fought there. The sun goes down in flame on the far horizon; the wild duck fly over and settle in the pools, the flowers rise to life year by year on the edges of slow water-courses; the calm mystery of it can be seen and remembered; but it can hardly be told in words.

2

Now side by side with that I will set another picture of a different kind.

A week or two ago I was traveling up North. The stations we passed through were many of them full of troops, the trains were crammed with soldiers, and very healthy and happy they looked. I was struck by their friendliness and kindness; they were civil and modest; they did not behave as if they were in possession of the line, as actually I suppose they were, but as if they were ordinary

travelers, and anxious not to incommode other people. I saw soldiers doing kind little offices, helping an old frail woman carefully out of the train and handing out her baggage, giving chocolates to children, interesting themselves in their fellow-travelers. At one place I saw a proud and anxious father, himself an old soldier, I think, seeing off a jolly young subaltern to the front, with hardly suppressed tears; the young man was full of excitement and delight, but did his best to cheer up the spirits of "Daddy," as he fondly called him. I felt very proud of our soldiers, their simplicity and kindness and real goodness. I was glad to belong to the nation which had bred them, and half forgot the grim business on which they were bent. We stopped at a junction. And here I caught sight of a strange little group. There was a young man, an officer, who had evidently been wounded: one of his legs was incased in a surgical contrivance, and he had a bandage round his head. He sat on a bench between two stalwart and cheerful-looking soldiers, who had their arms round him, and were each holding one of his hands. I could not see the officer clearly at first, as a third soldier was standing close in front of him and speaking encouragingly to him,

while at the same time he sheltered him from the crowd. But he moved away, and at the same moment the young officer lifted his head, displaying a drawn and sunken face, a brow compressed with pain, and looked wildly and in a terrified way round him, with large melancholy eyes. Then he began to beat his foot on the ground, and struggled to extricate himself from his companions; and then he buried his head in his chest and sank down in an attitude of angry despair. It was a sight that I cannot forget.

Just before the train went off, an officer got into my carriage, and as we started, said to me, "That 's a sad business there — it is a young officer who was taken prisoner by the Germans — one of our best men; he escaped, and after enduring awful hardships he got into our lines, was wounded, and sent home to hospital; but the shock and the anxiety preyed on his mind, and he has become, they fear, hopelessly insane — he is being sent to a sanatorium, but I fear there is very little chance of his recovery; he is wounded in the head as well as the foot. He is a wealthy man, devoted to soldiering, and he is just engaged to a charming girl. . . ."

Now there is a hard and bitter fact of life, very different from the story of the fenland. I am not going to argue about it or discuss it, because to trace the threads of it back into life entangles one at once helplessly in a dreadful series of problems: namely, how it comes to pass that a calamity, grievous and intolerable beyond all calamities in its pain and sorrow and waste, a strife abhorred and dreaded by all who are concerned in it, fruitful in every shade of misery and wretchedness, should yet have come about so inevitably and relentlessly. No one claims to have desired war; all alike plead that it is in self-defense that they are fighting, and maintain that they have labored incessantly for peace. Yet the great mills of fate are turning, and grinding out death and shame and loss. Every one sickens for peace, and yet any proposal of peace is drowned in cries of bitterness and rage. The wisest spend their time in pointing out the blessings which the conflict brings. The mother hears that the son she parted with in strength and courage is moldering in an unknown grave, and chokes her tears down. The fruit of years of labor is consumed, lands are laid desolate, the

weak and innocent are wronged; yet the great war-engine goes thundering and smashing on, leaving hatred and horror behind it; and all the while men pray to a God of mercy and loving-kindness and entreat His blessing on the work they are doing.

Is there then, if we are confronted with such problems as these, anything to do except to stay prostrate, like Job, in darkness and despair, just enduring the stroke of sorrow? Is there any excuse for bringing before the world at such a time as this, the delightful reveries, the easy happiness, the gentle schemes of serener and less troubled days? The book which follows was the work of a time which seems divided from the present by a dark stream of unhappiness. Is it right, is it decent, to unfold an old picture of peace before the eyes of those who have had to look into chaos and destruction? Would it not be braver to burn the record of the former things that have passed away?

4

Yes, I believe that it is right and wholesome to do this, because the most treacherous and cowardly thing we can do is to disbelieve in life. Those old

dreams and visions were true enough, and they will be true again. They represent the real life to which we must try to return. We must try to build up the conception afresh, not feebly to confess that we were all astray. We cannot abolish evil by confessing ourselves worsted by it; we can only overcome it by holding fast to our belief in labor and order and peace. It is a temptation which we must resist, to philosophize too much about war. Very few minds are large enough and clear enough to hold all the problems in their grasp. I do not believe for an instant that war has falsified our vision of peace. We must cling to it more than ever, we must emphasize it, we must dwell in it. I regard war as I regard an outbreak of pestilence; the best way to resist it is not to brood over it, but to practise joy and health. The ancient plagues which devastated Europe have not been overcome by philosophy, but by the upspringing desire of men to live cleaner and more wholesome lives. That instinct is not created by any philosophy or persuasion; it just arises everywhere and finds its way to the light.

To brood over the war, to spend our time in disentangling its intricate causes, seems to me a

task for future historians. But a lover of peace, confronted by the hideousness of war, does best to try, if he can, to make plain what he means by peace and why he desires it. I do not mean by peace an indolent life, lost in gentle reveries. I mean hard daily work, and mutual understanding, and lavish help, and the effort to reassure and console and uplift. And I mean, too, a real conflict — not a conflict where we set the best and bravest of each nation to spill each other's blood — but a conflict against crime and disease and selfishness and greediness and cruelty. There is much fighting to be done; can we not combine to fight our common foes, instead of weakening each other against evil? We destroy in war our finest parental stock, we waste our labor, we lose our garnered store; we give every harsh passion a chance to grow.

5

And yet there is one thing in the present war which I do in my heart of hearts feel to be worth fighting for, and that is for the hope of liberty. It is hard to say what liberty is, because the essence of it is the subjugation of personal inclina-

tions. The Germans claim that they alone know the meaning of liberty, and that they have arrived at it by discipline. But the bitterness of this war lies in the fact that the Germans are not content to set an example of attractive virtue, and to leave the world to choose it; but that if the world will not choose it, they will force it upon them by violence and the sword. It is this which makes me feel that the war may be a vast protest of the nations, which have the spirit of the future in their hearts, against a theory of life that represents the spirit of the past. And I thus, with some seeming inconsistency, believe that the war may represent the hope of peace at bay. If the nations can keep this clearly before them, and not be tempted either into reprisals, or into rewarding themselves by the spoils of victory, if victory comes; if it ends in the Germans being sincerely convinced that they have been misled and poisoned by a conception of right which is both uncivilized and unchristian, then I believe that all our sufferings may not be too great a price to pay for the future well-being of the world. That is the largest and brightest hope I dare to frame; and there are many hours and days when it seems all clouded and dim.

6

We cannot at this time disengage our thoughts from the war; we cannot and we ought not. Still less can we take refuge from it in idle dreams of peace and security; but at a time when every paper and book that we see is full of the war and its sufferings, there must be men and women who would do well to turn their hearts and minds for a little away from it. If we brood over it, if we feed our minds upon it, especially if we are by necessity noncombatants, it is all apt to turn to a festering horror which makes us useless and miserable. Whatever happens, we must try not to be simply the worse for the war, morbid, hysterical, beggared of faith and hope, horrified with life. That is the worst of evils; and I believe that it is wholesome to put as far as we can our cramped minds in easier postures, and to let our spirits have a wider range. We know how a dog who is perpetually chained becomes fierce and furious, and thinks of nothing but imaginary foes, so that the most peaceful passer-by becomes an enemy. I have felt, since the war began, a certain poison in the air, a tendency towards suspicion and contentiousness and vague hostility. We must exorcise that evil spirit if we

can; and I believe it is best laid by letting our minds go back to the old peace for a little, and resolving that the new peace which we believe is coming shall be of a larger and nobler quality; we may thus come to appreciate the happiness which we enjoyed but had not earned; and lay our plans for earning a new kind of happiness, the essence of which shall be a mutual trust, that desires to give and share whatever it enjoys, instead of hoarding it and guarding it.

A wise and unselfish woman wrote to me the other day in words which will long live in my mind; she had sent out one whom she dearly loved to the front, and she was fighting her fears as gallantly as she could. "Whatever happens we must not give way to dread," she wrote. "It does not do to dread anything for our own treasures."

That is the secret! What we must not do, in the time of war, is to indicate to every one else what their sacrifices ought to be; we must just make our own sacrifices; and perhaps the man who loves and values peace most highly does not sacrifice the least. But even he may try to realize that life does not contradict itself; but that the parts of it, whether they be delightful or dreadful, do work into each other in a marvelous way.

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I

ESCAPE

ALL the best stories in the world are but one story in reality — the story of an escape. It is the only thing which interests us all and at all times — how to escape. The stories of Joseph, of Odysseus, of the prodigal son, of the "Pilgrim's Progress," of the "Ugly Duckling," of Sintram, to name only a few out of a great number, they are all stories of escapes. It is the same with all love-stories. "The course of true love never can run smooth," says the old proverb, and love-stories are but tales of a man or a woman's escape from the desert of lovelessness into the citadel of love. Even tragedies like those of "Œdipus" and "Hamlet" have the same thought in the background. In the tale of Œdipus, the old blind king

in his tattered robe, who had committed in ignorance such nameless crimes, leaves his two daughters and the attendants standing between the old pear-tree and the marble tomb by the sacred fountain; he says the last faint words of love, till the voice of the god comes thrilling upon the air:

"Œdipus, why delayest thou?"

Then he walks away at once in silence, leaning on the arm of Theseus, and when at last the watchers dare to look, they see Theseus afar off, alone, screening his eyes with his hand, as if some sight too dreadful for mortal eyes had passed before him; but Œdipus is gone, and not with lamentation, but in hope and wonder. Even when Hamlet dies, and the peal of ordnance is shot off, it is to congratulate him upon his escape from unbearable woe; and that is the same in life. If our eye falls on the sad stories of men and women who have died by their own hand, how seldom do they speak in the scrawled messages they leave behind them as though they were going to silence and nothingness! It is just the other way. The unhappy fathers and mothers who, maddened by disaster, kill their children are hoping to escape with those they love best

out of miseries they cannot bear; they mean to fly together, as Lot fled with his daughters from the city of the plain. The man who slays himself is not the man who hates life; he only hates the sorrow and the shame which make unbearable that life which he loves only too well. He is trying to migrate to other conditions; he desires to live, but he cannot live so. It is the imagination of man that makes him seek death; only the animal endures, but man hurries away in the hope of finding something better.

It is, however, strange to reflect how weak man's imagination is when it comes to deal with what is beyond him, how little able he is to devise anything that he desires to do when he has escaped from life. The unsubstantial heaven of a Buddhist, with its unthinkable Nirvana, is merely the depriving life of all its attributes; the dull sensuality of the Mahometan paradise, with its ugly multiplication of gross delights; the tedious outcries of the saints in light which make the medieval scheme of heaven into one protracted canticle — these are all deeply unattractive, and have no power at all over the vigorous spirit. Even the vision of Socrates, the hope of unrestricted converse with great minds, is

a very unsatisfying thought, because it yields so little material to work upon.

The fact, of course, is that it is just the variety of experience which makes life interesting,— toil and rest, pain and relief, hope and satisfaction, danger and security,— and if we once remove the idea of vicissitude from life, it all becomes an indolent and uninspiring affair. It is the process of change which is delightful, the finding out what we can do and what we cannot, going from ignorance to knowledge, from clumsiness to skill; even our relations with those whom we love are all bound up with the discoveries we make about them and the degree in which we can help them and affect them. What the mind instinctively dislikes is stationariness; and an existence in which there was nothing to escape from, nothing more to hope for, to learn, to desire, would be frankly unendurable.

The reason why we dread death is because it seems to be a suspension of all our familiar activities. It would be terrible to have nothing but memory to depend upon. The only use of memory is that it distracts us a little from present conditions if they are dull, and it is only too true

that the recollection in sorrow of happy things is torture of the worst kind.

Once when Tennyson was suffering from a dangerous illness, his friend Jowett wrote to Lady Tennyson to suggest that the poet might find comfort in thinking of all the good he had done. But that is not the kind of comfort that a sufferer desires; we may envy a good man his retrospect of activity, but we cannot really suppose that to meditate complacently upon what one has been enabled to do is the final thought that a good man is likely to indulge. He is far more likely to torment himself over all that he might have done.

It is true, I think, that old and tired people pass into a quiet serenity; but it is the serenity of the old dog who sleeps in the sun, wags his tail if he is invited to bestir himself, but does not leave his place; and if one reaches that condition, it is but a dumb gratitude at the thought that nothing more is expected of the worn-out frame and fatigued mind. But no one, I should imagine, really hopes to step into immortality so tired and worn out that the highest hope that he can frame is that he will be let alone forever. We must not trust the drowsiness of the outworn spirit to frame

the real hopes of humanity. If we believe that the next experience ahead of us is like that of the mariners,

> In the afternoon they came unto a land
> In which it seemed always afternoon,

then we acquiesce in a dreamless sort of sleep as the best hope of man.

No, we must rather trust the desires of the spirit at its healthiest and most vigorous, and these are all knit up with the adventure of escape, as I have said. There is something hostile on our track: the copse that closes in upon the road is thick with spears; presences that do not wish us well move darkly in the wood and keep pace with us, and the only explanation we can give is that we need to be spurred on by fear if we are not drawn forward by desire or hope. We have to keep moving, and if we will not run to the goal, we must at least flee, with backward glances at something which threatens us.

There is an old and strange Eastern allegory of a man wandering in the desert; he draws near to a grove of trees, when he suddenly becomes aware that there is a lion on his track, hurrying

and bounding along on the scent of his steps. The man flees for safety into the grove; he sees there a roughly built water-tank of stone, excavated in the ground, and built up of masonry much fringed with plants. He climbs swiftly down to where he sees a ledge close on the water; as he does this, he sees that in the water lies a great lizard, with open jaws, watching him with wicked eyes. He stops short, and he can just support himself among the stones by holding on to the branches of a plant which grows from a ledge above him. While he thus holds on, with death behind him and before, he feels the branches quivering, and sees above, out of reach, two mice, one black and one white, which are nibbling at the stems he holds and will soon sever them. He waits despairingly, and while he does so, he sees that there are drops of honey on the leaves which he holds; he puts his lips to them, licks them off, and finds them very sweet.

The mice stand, no doubt, for night and day, and the honey is the sweetness of life, which it is possible to taste and relish even when death is before and behind; and it is true that the utter precariousness of life does not, as a matter of fact,

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distract us from the pleasure of it, even though the strands to which we hold are slowly parting. It is all, then, an adventure and an escape; but even in the worst insecurity, we may often be surprised to find that it is somehow sweet.

It is not in the least a question of the apparent and outward adventurousness of one's life. Foolish people sometimes write and think as though one could not have had adventures unless one has hung about at bar-room doors and in billiard-saloons, worked one's passage before the mast in a sailing-ship, dug for gold among the mountains, explored savage lands, shot strange animals, fared hardly among deep-drinking and loud-swearing men. It is possible, of course, to have adventures of this kind, and, indeed, I had a near relative whose life was fuller of vicissitudes than any life I have ever known: he was a sailor, a clerk, a policeman, a soldier, a clergyman, a farmer, a verger. But the mere unsettledness of it suited him: he was an easy comrade, brave, reckless, restless; he did not mind roughness, and the one thing he could not do was to settle down to anything regular and quiet. He did not dislike life at all, even when he stood half-naked, as he once told me he

did, on a board slung from the side of a ship, and dipped up pails of water to swab it, the water freezing as he flung it on the timbers. But with all this variety of life he did not learn anything particular from it all; he was much the same always, good natured, talkative, childishly absorbed, not looking backward or forward, and fondest of telling stories with sailors in an inn. He learned to be content in most companies and to fare roughly; but he gained neither wisdom nor humor, and he was not either happy or independent, though he despised with all his heart the stay-at-home, stick-in-the-mud life.

But we are not all made like this, and it is only possible for a few people to live so by the fact that most people prefer to stay at home and do the work of the world. My cousin was not a worker, and, indeed, did no work except under compulsion and in order to live; but such people seem to belong to an older order, and are more like children playing about, and at leisure to play because others work to feed and clothe them. The world would be a wretched and miserable place if all tried to live life on those lines.

It would be impossible to me to live so, though I

dare say I should be a better man if I had had a little more hardship of that kind; but I have worked hard in my own way, and though I have had few hairbreadth escapes, yet I have had sharp troubles and slow anxieties. I have been like the man in the story, between the lion and the lizard for many months together; and I have had more to bear, by temperament and fortune, than my roving cousin ever had to endure; so that because a life seems both sheltered and prosperous, it need not therefore have been without its adventures and escapes and its haunting fears.

The more one examines into life and the motives of it, the more does one perceive that the imagination, concerning itself with hopes of escape from any conditions which hamper and confine us, is the dynamic force that is transmuting the world. The child is forever planning what it will do when it is older, and dreams of an irresponsible choice of food and an unrestrained use of money; the girl schemes to escape from the constraints of home by independence or marriage; the professional man plans to make a fortune and retire; the mother dreams ambitious dreams for her children; the politician craves for power; the writer hopes to

gain the ear of the world — these are only a few casual instances of the desire that is always at work within us, projecting us into a larger and freer future out of the limited and restricted present. That is the real current of the world, and though there are sedate people who are contented with life as they see it, yet in most minds there is a fluttering of little tremulous hopes forecasting ease and freedom; and there are also many tired and dispirited people who are not content with life as they have it, but acquiesce in its dreariness; yet all who have any part in the world's development are full of schemes for themselves and others by which the clogging and detaining elements are somehow to be improved away. Sensitive people want to find life more harmonious and beautiful, healthy people desire a more continuous sort of holiday than they can attain, religious people long for a secret ecstasy of peace; there is, in fact, a constant desire at work to realize perfection.

And yet, despite it all, there is a vast preponderance of evidence which shows us that the attainment of our little dreams is not a thing to be desired, and that satisfied desire is the least contented of moods. If we realize our program, if we

succeed, marry the woman we love, make a fortune, win leisure, gain power, a whole host of further desires instantly come in sight. I once congratulated a statesman on a triumphant speech.

"Yes," he said, "I do not deny that it is a pleasure to have had for once the exact effect that one intended to have; but the shadow of it is the fear that having once reached that standard, one may not be able to keep it up."

The awful penalty of success is the haunting dread of subsequent failure, and even sadder still is the fact that in striving eagerly to attain an end, we are apt to lose the sense of the purpose which inspired us. This is more drearily true of the pursuit of money than of anything else. I could name several friends of my own who started in business with the perfectly definite and avowed intention of making a competence in order that they might live as they desired to live; that they might travel, read, write, enjoy a secure leisure. But when they had done exactly what they meant to do, the desires were all atrophied. They could not give up their work; they felt it would be safer to have a larger margin, they feared they might be bored, they had made friends, and did not wish to

sever the connection, they must provide a little more for their families: the whole program had insensibly altered. Even so they were still planning to escape from something — from some boredom or anxiety or dread.

And yet it seems very difficult for any person to realize what is the philosophical conclusion, namely, that the work of each of us matters very little to the world, but that it matters very much to ourselves that we should have some work to do. We seem to be a very feeble-minded race in this respect, that we require to be constantly bribed and tempted by illusions. I have known men of force and vigor both in youth and middle life who had a strong sense of the value and significance of their work; as age came upon them, the value of their work gradually disappeared; they were deferred to, consulted, outwardly reverenced, and perhaps all the more scrupulously and compassionately in order that they might not guess the lamentable fact that their work was done and that the forces and influences were in younger hands. But the men themselves never lost the sense of their importance. I knew an octogenarian clergyman who declared once in my presence that it was ridic-

ulous to say that old men lost their faculty of dealing with affairs.

"Why," he said, "it is only quite in the last few years that I feel I have really mastered my work. It takes me far less time than it used to do; it is just promptly and methodically executed." The old man obviously did not know that his impression that his work consumed less time was only too correct, because it was, as a matter of fact, almost wholly performed by his colleagues, and nothing was referred to him except purely formal business.

It seems rather pitiful that we should not be able to face the truth, and that we cannot be content with discerning the principle of it all, which is that our work is given to us to do not for its intrinsic value, but because it is good for us to do it.

The secret government of the world seems, indeed, to be penetrated by a good-natured irony; it is as if the Power controlling us saw that, like children, we must be tenderly wooed into doing things which we should otherwise neglect, by a sense of high importance, as a kindly father who is doing accounts keeps his children quiet by letting one hold the blotting-paper and another the ink, so

that they believe that they are helping when they are merely being kept from hindering.

And this strange sense of escape which drives us into activity and energy seems given us not that we may realize our aims, which turn out hollow and vapid enough when they are realized, but that we may drink deep of experience for the sake of its beneficent effect upon us. The failure of almost all Utopias and ideal states, designed and planned by writers and artists, lies in the absence of all power to suggest how the happy folk who have conquered all the ills and difficulties of life are to employ themselves reasonably and eagerly when there is nothing left to improve. William Morris, indeed, in his "News from Nowhere," confessed through the mouth of one of his characters that there would be hardly enough pleasant work, like hay-making and bridge-building and carpentering and paving, left to go round; and the picture of life which he draws, with its total lack of privacy, the shops where you may ask for anything that you want without having to pay, the guest-houses, with their straw-colored wine in quaint carafes, the rich stews served in gray earthenware dishes streaked with blue, the dancing, the caressing, the

singular absence of all elderly women, strikes on the mind with a quite peculiar sense of boredom and vacuity, because Morris seems to have eliminated so many sources of human interest, and to have conformed every one to a type, which is refreshing enough as a contrast, but very tiresome in the mass. It will not be enough to have got rid of the combative and sordid and vulgar elements of the world unless a very active spirit of some kind has taken its place. Morris himself intended that art should supply the missing force; but art is not a sociable thing; it is apt to be a lonely affair, and few artists have either leisure or inclination to admire one another's work.

Still more dreary was the dream of the philosopher J. S. Mill, who was asked upon one occasion what would be left for men to do when they had been perfected on the lines which he desired. He replied, after a long and painful hesitation, that they might find satisfaction in reading the poems of Wordsworth. But Wordsworth's poems are useful in the fact that they supply a refreshing contrast to the normal thought of the world, and nothing but the fact that many took a different view of life was potent enough to produce them.

So, for the present at all events, we must be content to feel that our imagination provides us with a motive rather than with a goal; and though it is very important that we should strive with all our might to eliminate the baser elements of life, yet we must be brave and wise enough to confess how much of our best happiness is born of the fact that we have these elements to contend with.

Edward FitzGerald once said that a fault of modern writing was that it tried to compress too many good things into a page, and aimed too much at omitting the homelier interspaces. We must not try to make our lives into a perpetual feast; at least we must try to do so, but it must be by conquest rather than by inglorious flight; we must face the fact that the stuff of life is both homely and indeed amiss, and realize, if we can, that our happiness is bound up with energetically trying to escape from conditions which we cannot avoid. When we are young and fiery-hearted, we think that a tame counsel; but, like all great truths, it dawns on us slowly. Not until we begin to ascend the hill do we grasp how huge, how complicated, how intricate the plain, with all its fields, woods, hamlets, and streams is; we are happy men and

women if in middle age we even faintly grasp that the actual truth about life is vastly larger and finer than any impatient youthful fancies about it are, though it is good to have indulged our splendid fancies in youth, if only for the delight of learning how much more magnificent is the real design.

In the "Pilgrim's Progress," at the very outset of the journey, *Evangelist* asks *Christian* why he is standing still. He replies:

"Because I know not whither to go."

Evangelist, with a certain grimness of humor, thereupon hands him a parchment roll. One supposes that it will be a map or a paper of directions, but all that it has written in it is, "Fly from the wrath to come!"

Well, it is no longer that of which we are afraid, a rain of fire and brimstone, storm and tempest! The Power behind the world has better gifts than these; but we still have to fly, where we can and as fast as we can; and when we have traversed the dim leagues, and have seen things wonderful at every turn, and have passed through the bitter flood, we shall find — at least this is my hope — no guarded city of God from which we

shall go no more out, but another road passing into wider fields and dimmer uplands, and to things more and more wonderful and strange and unknown.

LITERATURE AND LIFE

II

LITERATURE AND LIFE

THERE is a tendency, not by any means among the greater writers, but among what may be called the *epigoni*,— the satellites of literature, the men who would be great if they knew how,— to speak of the business of writing as if it were a sacred mystery, pontifically celebrated, something remote and secret, which must be guarded from the vulgar and the profane, and which requires an initiation to comprehend. I always feel rather suspicious of this attitude; it seems to me something of a pose, adopted in order to make other people envious and respectful. It is the same sort of precaution as the "properties" of the wizard, his gown and wand, the stuffed crocodile and the skeleton in the corner; for if there is a great fuss made about locking and double-locking a box, it creates a presumption of doubt as to whether there is anything particular

in it. In my nursery days one of my brothers was fond of locking up his private treasures in a box, producing it in public, unfastening it, glancing into it with a smile, and then softly closing it and turning the key in a way calculated to provoke the most intense curiosity as to the contents; but upon investigation it proved to contain nothing but the wool of sheep, dried beans, and cases of exploded cartridges.

So, too, I have known both writers and artists who made a mystery out of their craft, professed a holy rapture, as if the business of imagination and the art of setting things down were processes that could not be explained to ordinary people, but were the property of a brotherhood. And thus grow up cliques and coteries, of people who, by mutual admiration, try to console one another for the absence of the applause which the world will not concede them, and to atone for the coldness of the public by a warmth of intimate proximity.

This does not in the least apply to groups of people who are genuinely and keenly interested in art of any kind, and form a congenial circle in which they discuss frankly and enthusiastically

methods of work, the books, ideas, pictures, and music which interest them. That is quite a different thing, a real fortress of enthusiasm in the midst of Meshech and Kedar. What makes it base and morbid is the desire to exclude for the sake of exclusion; to indulge in solitary raptures, hoping to be overheard; to keep the tail of the eye upon the public; to attempt to mystify; and to trade upon the inquisitive instinct of human beings, the natural desire, that is, to know what is going on within any group that seems to have exciting business of its own.

The Preraphaelites, for instance, were a group and not a coterie. They were engaged in working and enjoying, in looking out for artistic promise, in welcoming and praising any performance of a kind that Rossetti recognized as "stunning." They were sure of their ground. The brotherhood, with its magazine, "The Germ," and its mystic initials, was all a gigantic game; and they held together because they were revolutionary in this, that they wished to slay, as one stabs a tyrant, the vulgarized and sentimental art of the day. They did not effect anything like a revolution, of course. It was but a ripple on the flowing

stream, and they diverged soon enough, most of them, into definite tracks of their own. The strength of the movement lay in the fact that they hungered and thirsted after art, clamoring for beauty, so Mr. Chesterton says, as an ordinary man clamors for beer. But their aim was not to mystify or to enlarge their own consequence, but to convert the unbeliever, and to produce fine things.

There is something in the Anglo-Saxon temperament which is on the whole unfavorable to movements and groups; the great figures of the Victorian time in art and literature have been solitary men, anarchical as regards tradition, strongly individualistic, working on their own lines without much regard for schools or conventions. The Anglo-Saxon is deferential, but not imitative; he has a fancy for doing things in his own way. Wordsworth, Keats, Shelley, Byron — were there ever four contemporary poets so little affected by one another's work? Think of the phrase in which Scott summed up his artistic creed, saying that he had succeeded, in so far as he had succeeded, by a "hurried frankness of composition," which was meant to please young and eager people. It

is true that Wordsworth had a solemn majesty about his work, practised a sort of priestly function, never averse to entertaining ardent visitors by conducting them about his grounds, and showing them where certain poems had been engendered. But Wordsworth, as FitzGerald truly said, was proud, not vain — proud like the high-hung cloud or the solitary peak. He felt his responsibility, and desired to be felt rather than to be applauded.

If one takes the later giants, Tennyson had a sense of magnificence, a childlike self-absorption. He said once in the same breath that the desire of the public to know the details of the artist's life was the most degrading and debasing curiosity,— it was ripping people up like pigs,— and added with a sigh that he thought that there was a congestion in the world about his own fame; he had received no complimentary letters for several days.

Browning, on the other hand, kept his raptures and his processes severely to himself. He never seems to have given the smallest hint as to how he conceived a poem or worked it out. He was as reticent about his occupation as a well-bred stock-broker, and did his best in society to give the im-

pression of a perfectly decorous and conventional gentleman, telling strings of not very interesting anecdotes, and making a great point of being ordinary. Indeed, I believe that Browning was haunted by the eighteenth-century idea that there was something not quite respectable about professional literature, and that, like Gray, he wished to be considered a private gentleman who wrote for his amusement. When in later years he took a holiday, he went not for secret contemplation, but to recover from social fatigue. Browning is really one of the most mysterious figures in literature in this respect, because his inner life of poetry was so entirely apart from his outer life of dinner-parties and afternoon calls. Inside the sacred inclosure, the winds of heaven blow, the thunder rolls; he proclaims the supreme worth of human passion, he dives into the disgraceful secrets of the soul: and then he comes out of his study a courteous and very proper gentleman, looking like a retired diplomatist, and talking like an intelligent commercial traveler — a man whose one wish appeared to be as good-humoredly like every one else as he conveniently could.

What, again, is one to make of Dickens, with

his love of private theatricals, his florid waistcoats and watch-chains, his sentimental radicalism, his kindly, convivial, gregarious life? He, again, did his work in a rapture of solitary creation, and seemed to have no taste for discussing his ideas or methods. Then, too, Dickens's later desertion of his work in favor of public readings and money-making is curious to note. He was like Shakspere in this, that the passion of his later life seemed to be to realize an ideal of bourgeois prosperity. Dickens seems to have regarded his art partly as a means of social reform, and partly as a method of making money. The latter aim is to a great extent accounted for by the miserable and humiliating circumstances of his early life, which bit very deep into him. Yet his art was hardly an end in itself, but something through which he made his way to other aims.

Carlyle, again, was a writer who put ideas first, despised his craft except as a means of prophesying, hated literary men and coteries, preferred aristocratic society, while at the same time he loved to say how unutterably tiresome he found it. Who will ever understand why Carlyle trudged many miles to attend parties and receptions at

Bath House, where the Ashburtons lived, or what stimulus he discerned in it? I have a belief that Carlyle felt a quite unconscious pride in the fact that he, the son of a small Scotch farmer, had his assured and respected place among a semi-feudal circle, just as I have very little doubt that his migration to Craigenputtock was ultimately suggested to him by the pleasure and dignity of being an undoubted laird, and living among his own, or at least his wife's, lands. In saying this, I do not wish to belittle Carlyle, or to accuse him of what may be called snobbishness. He had no wish to worm himself by slavish deference into the society of the great, but he liked to be able to walk in and say his say there, fearing no man; it was like a huge mirror that reflected his own independence. Yet no one ever said harder or fiercer things of his own fellow-craftsmen. His description of Charles Lamb as "a pitiful rickety, gasping, staggering, stammering tom-fool" is not an amiable one! Or take his account of Wordsworth — how instead of a hand-shake, the poet intrusted him with "a handful of numb unresponsive fingers," and how his speech "for prolixity, thinness, endless dilution" excelled all the other speech that

Carlyle had ever heard from mortals. He admitted that Wordsworth was "a genuine man, but intrinsically and extrinsically a small one, let them sing or say what they will." In fact, Carlyle despised his trade: one of the most vivid and voluble of writers, he derided the desire of self-expression; one of the most continuous and brilliant of talkers, he praised and upheld the virtue of silence. He spoke and wrote of himself as a would-be man of action condemned to twaddle; and Ruskin expressed very trenchantly what will always be the puzzle of Carlyle's life — that, as Ruskin said, he groaned and gasped and lamented over the intolerable burden of his work, and that yet, when you came to read it, you found it all alive, full of salient and vivid details, not so much patiently collected, as obviously and patently enjoyed. Again there is the mystery of his lectures. They seem to have been fiery, eloquent, impressive harangues; and yet Carlyle describes himself stumbling to the platform, sleepless, agitated, and drugged, inclined to say that the best thing his audience could do for him would be to cover him up with an inverted tub; while as he left the platform among signs of visible emotion and torrents

of applause, he thought, he said, that the idea of being paid for such stuff made him feel like a man who had been robbing hen-roosts.

There is an interesting story of how Tennyson once stayed with Bradley, when Bradley was headmaster of Marlborough, and said grimly one evening that he envied Bradley, with all his heart, his life of hard, fruitful, necessary work, and owned that he sometimes felt about his own poetry, what, after all, did all this elaborate versifying amount to, and who was in any way the better or happier for it?

The truth is that the man of letters forgets that this is exactly the same thought as that which haunts the busy man after, let us say, a day of looking over examination-papers or attending committees. The busy man, if he reflects at all, is only too apt to say to himself, "Here have I been slaving away like a stone-breaker, reading endless scripts, discussing an infinity of petty details, and what on earth is the use of it all?" Yet Sir Alfred Lyall once said that if a man had once taken a hand in big public affairs, he thought of literature much as a man who had crossed the Atlantic in a sailing-yacht might think of sculling a boat

upon the Thames. One of the things that moved Dr. Johnson to a tempest of wrath was when on the death of Lord Lichfield, the Lord Chancellor, Boswell said to him that if he had taken to the law as a profession, he might have been Lord Chancellor, and with the same title. Johnson was extremely angry, and said that it was unfriendly to remind a man of such things when it was too late.

One may conclude from such incidents and confessions that even some of the most eminent men of letters have been haunted by the sense that in following literature they have not chosen the best part, and that success in public life is a more useful thing as well as more glorious.

But one has to ask oneself what exactly an imaginative man means by success, and what it is that attracts him in the idea of it. Putting aside the more obvious and material advantages,— wealth, position, influence, reputation,— a man of far-reaching mind and large ideas may well be haunted by a feeling that if he had entered public life, he might by example, precept, influence, legislation, have done something to turn his ideas and schemes into accomplished facts, have effected some moral or social reform, have set a mark on

history. It must be remembered that a great writer's fame is often a posthumous growth, and we must be very careful not to attribute to a famous author a consciousness in his lifetime of his subsequent, or even of his contemporary, influence. It is undoubtedly true that Ruskin and Carlyle affected the thought of their time to an extraordinary degree. Ruskin summed up in his teaching an artistic ideal of the pursuit and influence of beauty, while Carlyle inculcated a more combative theory of active righteousness and the hatred of cant. But Ruskin's later years were spent in the shadow of a profound sense of failure. He thought that the public enjoyed his pretty phrases and derided his ideas; while Carlyle felt that he had fulminated in vain, and that the world was settling down more comfortably than ever into the pursuit of bourgeois prosperity and dishonest respectability.

And yet if, on the other hand, one compares the subsequent fame of men of action with the fame of men of letters, the contrast is indeed bewildering. Who attaches the smallest idea to the personality of the Lord Lichfield whom Dr. Johnson envied? Who that adores the memory of Wordsworth knows anything about Lord Goderich, a contem-

porary prime minister? The world reads and rereads the memoirs of dead poets, goes on pilgrimage to the tiny cottages where they lived in poverty, cherishes the smallest records and souvenirs of them. The names of statesmen and generals become dim except to professed historians, while the memories of great romancers and lyrists, and even of lesser writers still, go on being revived and redecorated. What would Keats have thought, as he lay dying in his high, hot, noisy room at Rome, if he had known that a century later every smallest detail of his life, his most careless letters, would be scanned by eager eyes, when few save historians would be able to name a single member of the cabinet in power at the time of his death?

There is a charming story told by Lord Morley, of how he once met Rossetti in the street at Chelsea when a general parliamentary election was going on, and it transpired, after a few remarks, that Rossetti was not even aware that this was the case. When he was informed, he said with some hesitation that he supposed that one side or other would get in, and that, after all, it did not very much matter. Lord Morley, telling the anecdote, said that he himself had forgotten which

side *did* get in, from which he concluded that it had not very much mattered.

The truth is that national life has to go on, and that very elaborate arrangements are made by statesmen and politicians for its administration. But it is in reality very unimportant. The wisest statesman in the world cannot affect it very much; he can only take advantage of the trend of public opinion. If he outruns it, he is instantly stranded; and perhaps the most he can do is to foresee how people will be thinking some six weeks ahead. But meanwhile the writer is speaking from the soul and to the soul; he is suggesting, inspiring, stimulating; he is presenting thoughts in so beautiful a form that they become desirable and adorable; and what the average man believes to-day is what the idealist has believed half a century before. He must take his chance of fame; and his best hope is to eschew rhetoric, which implies the consciousness of opponents and auditors, and just present his dreams and visions as serenely and beautifully as he can. The statesman has to argue, to strive, to compromise, to convert if he can, to coerce if he cannot. It is a dusty encounter, and he must sacrifice grace and perhaps truth in the onset. He

may gain his point, achieve the practicable and the second best; but he is an opportunist and a schemer, and he cannot make life into what he wills, but only into what he can manage. Of course the writer in a way risks more; he may reject the homely, useful task, and yet not have the strength to fit wings to his visions; he may live fruitlessly and die unpraised, with the thought that he has lost two birds in the hand for one which is not even in the bush. He may turn out a mere *Don Quixote*, helmeted with a barber's basin and tilting against windmills; but he could not choose otherwise, and he has paid a heavier price for his failure than many a man has paid for his success.

It is probably a wholly false antithesis to speak of life as a contrast to literature; one might as well draw a distinction between eating and drinking. What is meant as a rule is that if a man devotes himself to imaginative creation, to the perception and expression of beauty, he must be prepared to withdraw from other activities. But the imagination is a function of life, after all, and precisely the same holds good of stock-broking. The real fact is that we Anglo-Saxons, by instinct and inheritance, think of the acquisition of

property as the most obvious function of life. As long as a man is occupied in acquiring property, we ask no further questions; we take for granted that he is virtuously employed, as long as he breaks no social rules: while if he succeeds in getting into his hands an unusual share of the divisible goods of the world, we think highly of him. Indeed, our ideals have altered very little since barbarous times, and we still are under the impression that resourcefulness is the mark of the hero. I imagine that leisure as an occupation is much more distrusted and disapproved of in America than in England; but even in England, where the power to be idle is admired and envied, a man who lives as heroic a life as can be attained by playing golf and shooting pheasants is more trusted and respected than a rich man who paints or composes music for his amusement. Field sports are intelligible enough; the pursuit of art requires some explanation, and incurs a suspicion of effeminacy or eccentricity. Only when authorship becomes a source of profit is it thoroughly respectable.

I had a friend who died not very long ago. He had in his younger days done a little administrative work; but he was wealthy, and at a compara-

tively early age he abandoned himself to leisure. He traveled, he read, he went much into society, he enjoyed the company of his friends. When he died he was spoken of as an amateur, and praised as a cricketer of some merit. Even his closest friends seemed to find it necessary to explain and make excuses; he was shy, he stammered, he was not suited to parliamentary life; but I can think of few people who did so much for his friends or who so radiated the simplest sort of happiness. To be welcomed by him, to be with him, put a little glow on life, because you felt instinctively that he was actively enjoying every hour of your company. I thought, I remember, at his death, how hopeless it was to assess a man's virtue and usefulness in the terms of his career. If he had entered Parliament, registered a silent vote, spent his time in social functions, letter-writing, lobby-gossip, he would have been acclaimed as a man of weight and influence; but as it was, though he had stood by friends in trouble, had helped lame dogs over stiles, had been the center of good-will and mutual understanding to a dozen groups and circles, it seemed impossible to recognize that he had done anything in his generation. It is not to be claimed that his

was a life of persistent benevolence or devoted energy; but I thought of a dozen men who had lived selfishly and comfortably, making money and amassing fortunes, without a touch of real kindness or fine tenderness about them, who would yet be held to have done well and to have deserved respect, when compared with this peace-maker!

And then I perceived how intolerably false many of our cherished ideals are; that apart from lives of pure selfishness and annexation, many a professed philanthropist or active statesman is merely following a sterile sort of ambition; that it is rare on the whole for so-called public men to live for the sake of the public; while the simple, kindly, uncalculating, friendly attitude to life is a real source of grace and beauty, and leaves behind it a fragrant memory enshrined in a hundred hearts.

So, too, when it comes to what we call literature. No one supposes that we can do without it, and in its essence it is but an extension of happy, fine, vivid talk. It is but the delighted perception of life, the ecstasy of taking a hand in the great mystery, the joy of love and companionship, the worship of beauty and desire and energy and memory taking shape in the most effective form that man

can devise. There is no real merit in the accumulation of property; only the people who do the necessary work of the world, and the people who increase the joy of the world are worth a moment's thought, and yet both alike are little regarded.

Of course where the weakness of the artistic life really lies is that it is often not taken up out of mere communicativeness and happy excitement, as a child tells a breathless tale, but as a device for attracting the notice and earning the applause of the world; and then it is on a par with all other self-regarding activities. But if it is taken up with a desire to give rather than to receive, as an irrepressible sharing of delight, it becomes not a solemn and dignified affair, but just one of the most beautiful and uncalculating impulses in the world.

Then there falls another shadow across the path; the unhappiest natures I know are the natures of keen emotion and swift perception who yet have not the gift of expressing what they feel in any artistic medium. It is these, alas! who cumber the streets and porticoes of literature. They are attracted away from homely toil by the perilous sweetness of art, and when they attempt to ex-

press their raptures, they have no faculty or knack of hand. And these men and women fall with zealous dreariness or acrid contemptuousness, and radiate discomfort and uneasiness about them.

"A book," said Dr. Johnson, "should show one either how to enjoy life or how to endure it"—was ever the function of literature expressed more pungently or justly? Any man who enjoys or endures has a right to speak, if he can. If he can help others to enjoy or to endure, then he need never be in any doubt as to his part in life; while if he cannot ecstatically enjoy, he can at least good-humoredly endure.

THE NEW POETS

III

THE NEW POETS

THERE 'S a dark window in a gable which looks out over my narrow slip of garden, where the almond-trees grow, and to-day the dark window, with its black casement lines, had become suddenly a Japanese panel. The almond was in bloom, with its delicious, pink, geometrical flowers, not a flower which wins one's love, somehow; it is not homely or sweet enough for that. But it is unapproachably pure and beautiful, with a touch of fanaticism about it — the fanaticism which comes of stainless strength, as though one woke in the dawn and found an angel in one's room: he would not quite understand one's troubles!

But when I looked lower down, there was a sweeter message still, for the mezereon was awake, with its tiny porcelain crimson flowers and its minute leaves of bright green, budding as I think Aaron's rod must have budded, the very crust of

the sprig bursting into little flames of green and red.

I thought at the sight of all this that some good fortune was about to befall me; and so it did. When I came back there came a friend to see me whom I seldom see and much enjoy seeing. He is young, but he plays a fine part in the world, and he carries about with him two very fine qualities; one is a great and generous curiosity about what our writers are doing. He is the first man from whom I hear of new and beautiful work; and he praises it royally, he murmurs phrases, he even declaims it in his high, thin voice, which wavers like a dry flame. And what makes all this so refreshing is that his other great quality is an intensely critical spirit, which stares closely and intently at work, as though a crystalline lens.

After we had talked a little, I said to him:

"Come, praise me some new writers, you herald of the dawn! You always do that when you come to see me, and you must do it now." He smiled secretly, and drew out a slim volume from his pocket and read me some verses; I will not be drawn into saying the name of the poet.

"How do you find that?" he said.

"Oh," I said, "it is very good; but is it the finest gold?"

"Yes," he said, "it is that." And he then read me some more.

"Now," I said, "I will be frank with you. That seems to me very musical and accomplished; but it has what is to me the one unpardonable fault in poetry: it is literary. He has heard and read, that poet, so much sweet and solemn verse, that his mind murmurs like a harp hung among the trees that are therein; the winds blow into music. But I don't want that; I want a fount of song, a spring of living water." He looked a little vexed at that, and read me a few more pages. And then he went on to praise the work of two or three other writers, and added that he believed there was going to be a great outburst of poetry after a long frost.

"Well," I said, "I am sure I hope so. And if there is one thing in the world that I desire, it is that I may be able to recognize and love the new voices."

And then I told him a story of which I often think. When I was a young man, very much preoccupied with Tennyson and Omar Khayyám and

Swinburne, I went to stay with an elderly business man, a friend of my family. He was a great stout, rubicund man, very good-natured, and he had a voice like the cry of an expiring mouse, shrill and thin. We were sitting after dinner in his big dining-room, several of us, looking out into a wide, dusty garden, when the talk turned on books, and I suppose I praised Swinburne, for he asked me to say some, and I quoted the poem which says

> And even the weariest river
> Winds somewhere safe to sea.

He heard me attentively enough, and said it was pretty good; but then he said that it was nothing to Byron, and in his squeaky voice he quoted a quantity of Byron, whose poetry, I am sorry to say, I regarded as I might regard withered flowers or worse. His eyes brimmed with tears, and they fell on to his shirt-front; and then he said decisively that there had been no poetry since Byron — none at all. Tennyson was mere word music, Browning was unintelligible, and so forth. And I remember how, with the insolence of youth, I thought how dreadful it was that the old man

should have lost all sympathy and judgment; because poetry then seemed to me a really important matter, full of tones and values. I did not understand then, as I understand now, that it is all a question of signals and symbols, and that poetry is but, as the psalm says, what happens when one day telleth another and one night certifieth another. I know now that there can be no deceit about poetry, and that no poet can make you feel more than he feels himself, though he cannot always make another feel as much; and that the worth of his art exists only just in so far as he can say what he feels; and then I thought of my old friend's mind as I might think of a scarecrow among lonely fields, a thing absurd, ragged, and left alone, while real men went about their business. I did not say it, but I thought it in my folly. So I told my young friend that story; and I said:

"I know that it does not really matter what one loves and is moved by as long as one loves something and is moved by its beauty. But, still, I do not want that to happen to me; I do not want to be like a pebble on the beach, when the water draws past it to the land. I want to feel and

understand the new signals. In the nursery," I said, "we used to anger our governess when she read us a piece of poetry, by saying to her, 'Who made it up?' You should say, 'Who wrote it?' she would say. But I feel now inclined to ask, 'Who made it up?' and I feel, too, like the sign-painter on his rounds, who saw a new sign hung up at an inn, and said in disgust, 'That looks as if some one had been doing it himself.' Your poet seems to me only a very gifted and accomplished amateur."

"Well," he said rather petulantly, "it may be so, of course; but I don't think that you can hope to advance, if you begin by being determined to disapprove."

"No, not that," I said. "But one knows of many cases of inferior poets, who were taken up and trumpeted abroad by well-meaning admirers, whom one sees now to have had no significance, but to be so many blind alleys in the street of art; they led nowhere; one had just to retrace one's steps, if one explored them. Indeed," I said, "I had rather miss a great poet than be misled by a little one."

"Ah, no," he said, "I don't feel that. I had

rather be thrilled and carried away, even if I discovered afterwards that it was not really great."

"If you will freely admit that this may not be great," I said, "I am on your side. I do not mind your saying, 'This touches me with interest and delight; but it is not to be reckoned among the lords of the garden.' What I object to is your saying, 'This is great and eternal.' I feel that I should be able to respond to the great poet, if he flashed out among us; but he must be great, and especially in a time when there really is a quantity of very beautiful verse. I suspect that perhaps this time is one that will furnish a very beautiful anthology. There are many people alive who have written perhaps half a dozen exquisite lyrics, when the spring and the soaring thought and the vision and the beautiful word all suddenly conspired together. But there is no great, wide, large, tender heart at work. No, I won't even say that; but is there any great spirit who has all that and a supreme word-power as well? I believe that there is more poetry, more love of beauty, more emotion in the world than ever; and a great many men and women are living their poetry who just can't write it or sing it."

"A perverse generation seeking after a sign," he said rather grimly, "and there is no sign forthcoming except the old sign, that has been there for centuries! I don't care," he added, "about the sign of the thing. It is the quality that I want; and these new poets of whom I have been speaking have got the quality. That is all I ask for."

"No," I said, "I want a great deal more than that! Browning gave us the sense of the human heart, bewildered by all the new knowledge, and yet passionately desiring. Tennyson —"

"Poor old Tennyson!" he said.

"That is very ungracious," I said. "You are as perverse as I was about Byron when the old banker quoted him with tears. I was going to say, and I will say it, that Tennyson, with all his faults, was a great lord of music; and he put into words the fine, homely domestic emotion of the race — the poetry of labor, order, and peace. It was new and rich and splendid, and because it seems to you old-fashioned, you call it mere respectability; but it was the marching music of the world, because he showed men that faith was enlarged and not overturned by science. These two were great, because they saw far and wide; they knew by in-

stinct just what the ordinary man was thinking, who yet wished his life to be set to music. These little men of yours don't see that. They have their moments of ecstasy, as we all have, in the blossoming orchard full of the songs of birds. And that will always and forever give us the lyric, if the skill is there. But I want something more than that; I, you, thousands of people, are feeling something that makes the brain thrill and the heart leap. The mischief is that we don't know what it is, and I want a great poet to come and tell us."

"Ah," he said, "I am afraid you want something ethical, something that satisfies the man in Tennyson who

> Walked between his wife and child
> And now and then he gravely smiled.

But we have done with all that. What we want is people who can express the fine, rare, unusual thoughts of highly organized creatures, and you want a poet to sing of bread and butter!"

"Why, yes," I said, "I think I agree with FitzGerald that tea and bread and butter are the only foods worth anything — the only things one cannot do without. And it is just the things that one

cannot do without that I want the new great poet to sing of. I agree with William Morris that art is the one thing we all want, the expression of man's joy in his work. And the more that art retires into fine nuances and intellectual subtleties, the more that it becomes something esoteric and mysterious, the less I care about it. When Tennyson said to the farmer's wife, 'What 's the news?' she replied, 'Mr. Tennyson, there 's only one piece of news worth telling, and that is that Christ died for all men.' Tennyson said very grandly and simply, 'Ah, that 's old news and good news and *new* news!' And that is exactly what I want the poets to tell us. It is a common inheritance, not a refined monopoly, that I claim."

He laughed at this, and said:

"I think that 's rather a mid-Victorian view; I will confute you out of the Tennyson legend. When Tennyson called Swinburne's verse 'poisonous honey, brought from France,' Swinburne retorted by speaking of the laureate's domestic treacle. You can't have both. If you like treacle, you must not clamor for honey."

"Yes, I prefer honey," I said, "but you seem to me to be in search of what I called *literary* po-

etry. That is what I am afraid of. I don't want the work of a mind fed on words, and valuing ideas the more that they are uncommon. I hate what is called 'strong' poetry; that seems to me to be generally the coarsest kind of romanticism — melodrama in fact. I want to have in poetry what we are getting in fiction — the best sort of realism. Realism is now abjuring the heroic theory; it has thrown over the old conventions, the felicitous coincidences, life arranged on ideal lines; and it has gone straight to life itself, strong, full-blooded, eager life, full of mistakes and blunders and failures and sharp disasters and fears. Life goes shambling along like a big dog, but it has got its nose on the scent of something. It is a much more mysterious and prodigious affair than life rearranged upon romantic lines. It means something very vast indeed, though it splashes through mud and scrambles through hedges. You may laugh at what you call ethics, but that is only a name for one of many kinds of collisions. It is the fact that we are always colliding with something, always coming unpleasant croppers, that is the exciting thing. I want the poet to tell me what the obscure wingèd thing it is that we are fol-

lowing; and if he can't explain it to me, I want to be made to feel that it is worth while following. I don't say that all life is poetical material. I don't think that it is; but there is a thing called beauty which seems to me the most maddeningly perfect thing in the world. I see it everywhere, in the dawn, in the far-off landscape, with all its rolling lines of wood and field, in the faces and gestures of people, in their words and deeds. That is a clue, a golden thread, a line of scent, and I shall be more than content if I am encouraged to follow that."

"Ah," he said, "now I partly agree with you. It is precisely that which the new men are after; they take the pure gold of life and just coin it into word and phrase, and it is that which I discern in them."

"Yes," I said, "but I want something a great deal bigger than that. I want to see it everywhere and in everything. I don't want to have to wall in a little space and make it silent and beautiful, and forget what is happening outside. I want a poet to tell me what it is that leaps in the eyes and beckons in the smiles of people whom I meet — people whom often enough I could not live with,—

the more's the pity,— but whom I want to be friends with, all the same. I want the common joys and hopes and visions to be put into music. And when I find a man, like Walt Whitman, who does show me the beauty and wonder and the strong affections and joys of simple hearts, so that I feel sure that we are all desiring the same thing, though we cannot tell each other what it is, then I feel I am in the presence of a poet indeed."

My young friend shut up the little book which he had been holding in his hand.

"Yes," he said, "that would be a great thing; but one can't get at things in that way now. We must all specialize; and if you want to follow the new aims and ideals of art, you must put aside a great deal of what is called our common humanity, and you must be content to follow a very narrow path among the stars. I do not mind speaking quite frankly. I do not think you understand what art is. It is essentially a mystery, and the artist is a sort of hermit in the world. It is not a case of 'joys in widest commonalty spread,' as Daddy Wordsworth said. That is quite a different affair; but art has got to withdraw itself, to be content to be misunderstood; and I think that you

have just as much parted company with it as your old friend the banker."

"Well," I said, "we shall see. Anyhow, I will give your new poets a careful reading, and I shall be glad if I can really admire them, because, indeed, I don't want to be stranded on a lee shore."

And so my friend departed; and I began to wonder whether the art of which he spoke was not, after all, as real a thing as the beauty of my almond-flower and my mezereons! If so, I should like to be able to include it and understand it, though I do not want to think that it is the end.

WALT WHITMAN

IV

WALT WHITMAN

1

THERE come days and hours in the lives of the busiest, most active, most eager of us, when we suddenly realize with a shock or a shudder, it may be, or perhaps with a sense of solemn mystery, that has something vast, inspiring, hopeful about it, the solidity and the isolation of our own identity. Much of our civilized life is an attempt, not deliberate but instinctive, to escape from this. We organize ourselves into nations and parties, into sects and societies, into families and companies, that we may try to persuade ourselves that we are not alone; and we get nearest to persuading ourselves that we are at one, when we enter into the secrets of love or friendship, and feel that we know as we are known. But even that vision fades, and we become aware, at sad moments, that the comradeship is over; the soul that came so

close to us, smiled in our eyes, was clasped to our heart, has left us, has passed into the darkness, or if it still lives and breathes, has drawn away into the crowd. And then one sees that no fusion is possible, that half the secrets of the heart must remain unguessed and untold. That even if one had the words to do it, one could not express the sense of our personality, much of which escapes even our own conscious and critical thought. One has, let us say, a serious quarrel with a close friend, and one hears him explaining and protesting, and yet he does not know what has happened, cannot understand, cannot even perceive where the offense lay; and at such a moment it may dawn on us that we too do not know what we have done; we have exhibited some ugly part of ourselves, of which we are not conscious; we have stricken and wounded another heart, and we cannot see how it was done. We did not intend to do it, we cry. Or again we realize that we regard some one with a causeless aversion, and cannot give any reason for it; or we see that we ourselves have the same freezing and disconcerting effect upon another; and so after hundreds of such experiences, we become aware at last that no real, free, entire communication is

possible; that however eagerly we tell our thoughts and display our temperaments, there must always remain something which is wrapped in darkness, the incommunicable essence of ourself that can blend with no other soul.

But again it is true that all human souls who have an instinct for expression — writers, painters, musicians — have always been trying to do this one thing, to make signals, to communicate, to reveal themselves, to "unpack the heart in words"; and what has often hindered the process and nullified their efforts has been an uneasy dignity and vanity, that must try to make out a better case than the facts justify. For a variety of motives, and indeed for the best of motives, men and women suppress, exalt, refine the presentment of themselves, because they desire to be loved, and think that they must therefore be careful to be admired, just as the lover adorns himself and puts his best foot forward, and hides all that may disconcert interest or sympathy. So that it happens in life that often when we most desire to be real, we are most unreal.

What differentiates Walt Whitman from all other writers that I know, is that he tried to reveal

himself, and on the whole contrived to do so with less reserve than any other human being.

"I know perfectly well my own egotism," he wrote; "I know my omnivorous lines, and must not write any less." He was not disconcerted by any failure of art, or any propriety, or any apparent discrepancy.

> Do I contradict myself?
> Very well then, I contradict myself.
> I am large, I contain multitudes.

He had no artistic conscience, as we say.

"Easily written, loose-finger'd chords — I feel the thrum of your climax and close."

In the curious and interesting essay called "A Backward Glance over Travel's Roads," which he wrote late in life, surveying his work, he admits that he has not gained acceptance, that his book is a failure, and has incurred marked anger and contempt; and he good-humoredly quotes a sentence from a friend's letter, written in 1884, "I find a solid line of enemies to you everywhere." And yet, he says, for all that, and in spite of everything, he has had "his say entirely his own way, and put it unerringly on record." It is simply "a faithful, and doubtless self-willed record," he says.

That then was Walt Whitman's program, surely in its very scope and range worthy of some amazement and respect! Because it is not done insolently or with any braggadocio, in spite of what he calls "the barbaric yawp." I do not think that anything is more notable than the good-humor and the equanimity of it all. He is not interested in himself in a morbid or self-conscious way; he has not the slightest wish to make himself out to be fine or magnificent or superior — it is quite the other way. He is merely going to try to break down the barriers between soul and soul, to let the river of self ripple and welter and wash among the grasses at the feet of man. He does not wish you to admire it, though he hopes you may love it; there are to be no excuses or pretenses; he does not wish to be seen at certain angles or in subdued lights. He casts himself down in his nakedness, and lets who will observe him; and all this not because he is either hero or saint; his proudest title is to be an average man, one of the crowd, with passions, weaknesses, uglinesses, even deformities. He is there, he is just so, and you may take it or leave it; but he is not ashamed or sensitive, nor in any way abashed; he smiles his frank, good-natured

smile; and suddenly one perceives the greatness of it! He is neither fanatic nor buffoon; he is not performing like the boxer or wrestler, nor is he sitting mournfully and patiently for the sake of the pence, like the fat man at the fair; he is merely trying to say what he thinks and feels, and if he has any aim at all, it is to tempt others into unabashed sincerity. He cries to man, "If you would only recognize yourself as you are, without pretenses or excuses, the dignity which your subterfuges are meant to secure would be yours without question." It is not a question of good, bad, or indifferent. Every one has a right to be where he is, and there is a reason for him and a justification too. That is the gospel of Walt Whitman; it may be a bad gospel, or an ugly one, or an indecorous one; but no one can pretend that it is not a big one.

2

One immense and fruitful discovery Walt Whitman made, and yet one can hardly call it a discovery; it is more perhaps an inspired doctrine, unsupported by argument, wholly unphilosophical, proclaimed with a childlike loudness and confidence,

but yet probably true: the doctrine, that is, of the indissoluble union between body and soul. Indissoluble, one calls it, and yet nothing is more patent than the fact that it is a union which is invariably and inevitably dissolved in death; while on the other hand, one sees in certain physical catastrophies, such as paralysis, brain-concussion, senile decay, insanity, the soul apparently reduced to the condition of a sleeping partner, or so far deranged as to be unable to express anything but some one dominant emotion; or, more bewildering still, one sees the moral sense seemingly suspended by a physical disorder. And yet for all that, the doctrine may be essentially and substantially true; the vitality of the soul may be bound up with its power of expressing itself in material terms. It may be that the soul-stuff, which we call life, has an existence apart from its material manifestation, and that individuality, as we see it, may be a mere phenomenon of the passage of a force, like the visibility of electricity under certain conditions; indeed it seems more probable that matter is a function of thought rather than thought a function of matter. It is likely enough that animals have no conscious sense of any division of aims,

any antagonism between physical and mental desires; but as the human race develops, the imagination, the sense of the opposition between the reason and the appetite, begins to emerge. Man becomes aware that his will and his wish may not coincide; and thus develops the medieval theory of asceticism, the belief that the body is essentially vile, and suggests base desires to the mind, which the mind has the power of controlling. That conception fitted closely to the feudal theory of government, in which the interests of the ruler and the subject did not necessarily coincide; the ruler governed with his own interests in view, and coerced his subjects if he could; but the new theory of government does not separate the ruler from the state. The government of a state with democratic institutions is the will of the people taking shape, and the phenomena of rule are but those of the popular will expressing itself, the object being that each individual should have his due preponderance; the ultimate end being as much individual liberty as is consistent with harmonious coöperation.

That is a rough analogy of the doctrine of Walt Whitman; namely that the individual, soul and body, is a polity; and that the true life is to be

found in a harmonious coöperation of body and soul. The reason is not at liberty to deride or to neglect the bodily desires, even the meanest and basest of them, because every desire, whether of soul or body, is the expression of something that exists in the animating principle. Take, for example, the case of physical passion. That, in its ultimate analysis, is the instinct for propagating life, the transmission and continuance of vitality. The reason must not ignore or deplore it, but direct it into the proper channels; it may indicate the dangers that it incurs; but merely to thwart it, to regard it with shame and horror, is to establish an internecine warfare. The true function is rather to ennoble the physical desire by the just concurrence of the soul. But the essence of the situation is coöperation and not coercion; and each must be ready to compromise. If the physical nature will not compromise with the reason, the disasters of unbridled passion follow; if the reason will not coöperate with the physical desire, the result is a sterile intellectualism, a life of starved and timid experience. It was here, of course, that Walt Whitman's view gave offense; he thought of civilization as a conventional system, cultivating a false

shame and an ignoble reserve about bodily processes. But the vital truth of his doctrine lies in the fact that many of our saddest, because most remediable, disasters are caused by a timid reticence about the strongest force that animates the world, the force of reproduction. Whitman felt, and truly felt, that reason and sentiment have outrun discretion. It may be asked, indeed, how this terror of all outspokenness has developed in the human race, so that parents cannot bear to speak to their children about an experience which they will be certain to make acquaintance with in some far more violent and base form. Does this shrinking delicacy, this sacred reserve, mean nothing, it may be asked? Well, it may be said, if this sensitiveness is so valuable that it must not be required to anticipate tenderly and faithfully what will be communicated in a grosser form, then silence is justified, and not otherwise. But transfer this reticence about a matter of awful concern to some other region of morals, what should we think of the parent who so feared to lessen the affection of a child by rebuking it for a lie or a theft as to let it go out into the world ignorant that either was reprobated? Whitman's argument would rather be

that a parent should say to a child, "There is a force within you which will to a large extent determine the happiness of your life; it must be guarded and controlled. You will probably not be able to ignore or disregard it, and you must bring it into harmonious coöperation with mind and reason and duty. There is nothing that is shameful about its being there; indeed, it is the dominant force in the world. The shameful thing is to use it shamelessly." Yet the attitude of parents too often is to treat the subject, not as if it were sacred, but as if it were unmentionable; so that the very fact of the child's own origin would seem to be an essentially shameful thing.

The Greeks, it is true, had an instinct for the thought of the vital interdependence of body and soul; but they thought too much of the glowing manifestation of the health and beauty of youth, and viewed the decay and deformity of the human frame too much as a disgrace and an abasement. But here again comes in the largeness of Whitman's presentment, that whatever disasters befall the body, whether through drudgery or battle, disease or sin, they are all parts of a rich and large experience, not necessarily interrupting the

coöperation of mind and matter. This is the strongest proof of Whitman's faith in the essential brotherhood of man, that such horrors and wretchednesses do not seem to him to interrupt the design, or to destroy the possibility of a human sympathy which is instinctive rather than a matter of devout effort. Whitman is here on the side of the very greatest and finest human spirits, in that he is shocked and appalled by nothing. He does not call it the best of worlds, but it is the only world that he knows; and the glowing interest, the passionate emotion, the vital rush and current of it, prove beyond all doubt that we are in touch with something very splendid and magnificent indeed, and that no misdeed or disaster forfeits our share in the inheritance. He is utterly at variance with the hideous Calvinistic theory, that God sent some of His creatures into the world for their pain and ruin. Whatever happens to your body or your soul, says Whitman, it is worth your while to live and to have lived. He adopts no facile system of compensations and offsets. He rather protests with all his might that, however broken your body or fatuous your mind, it is a good thing for you to have taken a hand

in the affair; and that the essence of the whole situation has not been your success, your dignity, your comfortable obliteration of half your faculties, or on the other hand your failure, your vileness, or your despair, but that just at the time and place at which the phenomenon called yourself took place, that intricate creature, with its bodily needs and desires, its joys of the senses, its outlook on the strange world, took shape and made you exactly what you are, and nothing else. As he says in one of his finest apologues:

"Through birth, life, death, burial, the means are provided, nothing is scanted.

"Through angers, losses, ambition, ignorance, ennui, what you are picks its way."

3

Then too Walt Whitman claims to be the poet, not of the past or even only of the present, but the singer of the future. He says in "The Backward Glance," which I have already quoted, and which must be carefully read by any one who wishes to understand his work — at least in so far as he understood it himself,—"Isolated ad-

vantages in any rank or grace or fortune — the direct or indirect threads of all the poetry of the past — are in my opinion distasteful to the republican genius. . . . Established poems, I know, have the very great advantage of chanting the already performed, so full of glories, reminiscences dear to the minds of men." And he says too that, "The educated world seems to have been growing more and more ennuied for ages, leaving to our time the inheritance of it all." And he further says: "The ranges of heroism and loftiness with which Greek and feudal poets endow'd their godlike or lordly born characters, I was to endow the democratic averages of America. I was to show that we, here and to-day, are eligible to the grandest and the best — more eligible now than any times of old were."

This is a lofty claim, boldly advanced and maintained; and here I am on uncertain ground, because I do not suppose that I can realize what the democratic spirit of America really is. Granted, however, that it is a free and a noble spirit, I feel a doubt as to whether it is possible for any nation, at any time in the world's history, really to take a new start. The American nation is not a new

nation; it is in a sense a very old nation. It has had a perfectly new and magnificent field for its energies, and it has made a sweep of the old conventions; but it cannot get rid of its inheritance of temperament; and I think that, so far as I can judge, it is too anxious to emphasize its sense of revolt, its consciousness of newness of life. Whitman himself would not be so anxious to declare the ennui of the old, if he did not feel himself in a way trammeled by it. The moment that a case is stated with any vehemence, that moment it is certain that the speaker has antagonists in his eye. There is a story of Professor Blackie at Edinburgh making a tirade against the stuffiness of the old English universities to Jowett, the incisive Master of Balliol. At the end, he said generously, "I hope you people at Oxford do not think that we are your enemies up here?" "No," said Jowett dryly, "to tell the truth, we don't think about you at all!" The man who is really making a new beginning, serenely confident in his strength, does not, as Professor Blackie did, concern himself with his predecessors at all. Perhaps, indeed, the democratic spirit of America may be quietly glorying in its strength, and may be merely

waiting till it suits it to speak. But I do not think it can be said to have found full expression. It seems to me — I may well be wrong — that in matters of culture, the American is far more seriously bent on knowing what has been done in the past even than the Englishman. The Englishman takes the past for granted; he is probably more deeply and instinctively penetrated with its traditions than he knows; but ever since the Romantic movement began in England, about a century ago, the general tendency is anarchical and anticlassical. Writers like Wordsworth, Browning, Carlyle, Ruskin, had very little deference about them. They did not even trouble to assert their independence; they said what they thought, and as they thought it. But the spirit of American literature does not on the whole appear to me to be a democratic spirit. It has not, except in the case of Walt Whitman himself, shown any strong tendency to invent new forms or to ventilate new ideas. It has not broken out into crude, fresh, immature experiments. It has rather worked as the Romans did, who anxiously adopted and imitated Greek models, admiring the form but not comprehending the spirit. A revolt in literary art, such as the

Romantic movement in England, has no time to concern itself with the old forms and traditions. Writers like Wordsworth, Keats, Shelley, Byron, Walter Scott, had far too much to say for themselves to care how the old classical schools had worked. They used the past as a quarry, not as a model. But the famous American writers have not originated new forms, or invented a different use of language; they have widened and freshened traditions, they have not thrown them overboard. Neither, if I interpret facts rightly, have the Americans developed a new kind of aristocracy. Whitman's talk of democratic averages is beside the point. The process of leveling up and leveling down only produces low standards. What the world needs, whether in England or America, is a new sort of aristocracy — simple, disinterested, bold, sympathetic, enthusiastic men, of clear vision and free thought. And what the democracy needs is not an envious dislike of all prominence and greatness, but an eye for all greatness, and an admiration for all courage and largeness of soul. England suspects, perhaps erroneously, that America has founded an aristocracy of wealth and influence and physical prowess, rather than an

aristocracy of simplicity and fearlessness. One believes that the competitive, the prize-winning spirit, is even more dominant in America than in England. No one doubts the fierce energy and the aplomb of America; but can it be said that *ideas*, the existence of which is the ultimate test of national vigor, are really more prevalent in America than in England? It all depends, of course, upon whether one values the Greek or the Roman ideal more highly, the interest, that is, of life, or the desire to rule and prosper. If the aim of civilization is orderliness, then the Roman aim is the better; but if the aim is spiritual animation, then the Greeks are the winners. Yet in the last century, England has been more fruitful in ideas than America, although America is incomparably more interested in education than England is.

But it is hard to balance these things. What remains is the fact that Walt Whitman has drawn a fine democratic ideal. His democrat is essentially a worker, with every sort of vigorous impulse, living life in an ecstasy of health and comradeship, careless of money and influence and position, content to live a simple life, finding beauty, and hope, and love, and labor, enough, in

the spirit of the great dictum of William Morris, that the reward of labor is life — not success or power or wealth, but the sense of living fully and freely.

I do not claim that this spirit exists in England yet; but does it exist in America? What, in fact, constitutes the inspiration of the average American; what does he expect to find in life, and to make of life? Whitman has no doubt at all. But in what other American writer does this ideal find expression?

4

It remains to say a few words about the artistic methods of Walt Whitman. He himself claims no artistic standard whatever. He says that he wishes to create an atmosphere; and that his one aim has been suggestiveness. "I round and finish little, if anything; and could not consistently with my scheme. The reader will always have his or her part to do, just as much as I have had mine."

He says that his purpose has been "not to carry out in the approved style some choice plot of fortune or misfortune, or fancy, or fine thoughts, or incidents or courtesies — all of which

has been done overwhelmingly and well, probably never to be excelled . . . but to conform with and build on the concrete realities and theories of the universe furnished by science, and henceforth the only irrefragable basis for anything, verse included — to root both influences in the emotional and imaginative action of the modern time, and dominate all that precedes or opposes them." He adds, "No one will get at my verses who insists upon viewing them as a literary performance, or attempt at such performance, or as aiming mainly toward art or estheticism."

It is, of course, quite true that no writer is bound by traditions of art, and there is no one who need consider how the thing has been done before, or follow a prescribed code. But for all that, art is not a thing of rules made and enforced by critics. All that critics can do is to determine what the laws of art are; because art has laws underlying it which are as certain as the laws of gravity, even if they are not known. The more permanent art is, the more it conforms to these laws; because the fact is that there is a vital impulse in the human mind towards the expression of beauty, and a vital discrimination too as to the form and

method of that expression. Architecture, for instance, and music, are alike based upon instinctive preferences in human beings, the one for geometrical form, the others for the combination of vibrations. It is a law of music, for instance, that the human being prefers an octave in absolute unison, and not an octave of which one note is a semitone flat. That is not a rule invented by critics; it is a law of human perception and preference. Similarly there is undoubtedly a law which determines human preferences in poetry, though a far more complicated law, and not yet analyzed. The new poet is not a man who breaks the law, but who discovers a real extension of it.

The question then, roughly, is this: Whitman chose to express himself in a species of poetry, based roughly upon Hebrew poetry, such, as we have in the Psalms and Prophets. If this is a true expansion of the esthetic law of poetry, then it is a success; if it is not a true expansion, but only a wilful variation, not consonant with the law, it is a failure.

Now there are many effects in Whitman which are, I believe, inconsistent with the poetical law. Not to multiply instances, his grotesque word-

inventions —"Me imperturbe!" "No dainty dolce affettuoso I," "the drape of the day"— his use of Greek and Latin and French terms, not correctly used and not even rightly spelt, his endless iterations, lists, catalogues, categories, things not clearly visualized or even remotely perceived, but swept relentlessly in, like the debris of some storeroom, all these are ugly mannerisms which simply blur and encumber the pages. The question is not whether they offend a critical and cultured mind, but whether they produce an inspiring effect upon any kind of mind.

Then too his form constantly collapses, as though he had no fixed scheme in his mind. There are many poems which begin with an ample sweep, and suddenly crumble to pieces, as though he were merely tired of them.

Then again there seem to me to be some simply coarse, obscene, unpleasant passages, not of relentless realism but of dull inquisitiveness. They do not attract or impress; they do not provide a contrast or an emphasis. They simply lie, like piles of filth, in rooms designed for human habitation. If it is argued that art may use any materials, I can only fall back upon my belief that such

passages are as instinctively repulsive to the artistic sense as strong-smelling cheeses stacked in a library! There is no moral or ethical law against such a practice; but the esthetic conscience of humanity instinctively condemns it. When I examine the literature which has inspired and attracted the minds of humanity, whether trained or untrained, I find that they avoid this hideous intrusion of nastiness; and I am inclined to infer that writers who introduce such episodes, and readers who like them, have some other impulse in view, which is neither the sense of beauty nor the perception of art. But if Whitman, or any one else, can convert the world to call this art, and to enjoy it as art, then he will prove that he understands the law of preference better than I do.

But when all this has been said and conceded, there yet remain countless passages of true and vital beauty, exquisite phrases, haunting pictures, glimpses of perfect loveliness. His poems of comradeship and the open air, his pictures of family life, have often a magical thrill of passion, leaving one rapturous and unsatisfied, believing in the secrets behind the world, and hoping for a touch of like experience.

If I may take one poem as typical of the best that is in Whitman — and what a splendid best! — it shall be "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking," from the book called "Sea-drift." I declare that I can never read this poem without profound emotion; it is here that he fully justifies his claim to atmosphere and suggestiveness; the nesting birds, the sea's edge, with its "liquid rims and wet sands"— what a magical phrase! — the angry moan of the breakers under the yellow, drooping moon, the boy with his feet in the water, and the wind in his hair — this is all beyond criticism.

Demon or bird! (said the boy's soul)
Is it indeed toward your mate you sing? or is it mostly to me?
For I, that was a child, my tongue's use sleeping, now I have heard you
Now in a moment I know what I am for,— I awake,
And already a thousand singers, a thousand songs, clearer, louder and more sorrowful than yours,
A thousand warbling echoes have started to life within me, never to die.

And then he cries to the waves to tell him what they have been whispering all the time.

Whereto answering, the sea,
Delaying not, hurrying not,

Whisper'd me through the night and very plainly before day-break,
Lisp'd to me the low and delicious word death.

This theme, it will be remembered, is worked out more fully in the Lincoln poem, "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd," with the "Song of Death," too long, alas, to quote here — it would be delightful even to inscribe the words — which seems to me for splendor of language, sweetness of rhythm, and stateliness of cadence — to say nothing of the magnificence of the thought — to be incontestably among the very greatest poems of the world.

If Whitman could always have written so! Then he need hardly have said that the strongest and sweetest songs remained to be sung; but this, and many other gems of poetry, lie in radiant fragments among the turbid and weltering rush of his strange verse; and thus one sees that if there is indeed a law of art, it lies close to the instinct of suppression and omission. One may think anything; one may say most things; but if one means to sway the human heart by that one particular gift of words, ordered and melodiously intertwined, one must heed what experience tells the aspirant —

that no fervor of thought, or exuberance of utterance, can make up for the harmony of the firmly touched lyre, and the music of the unuttered word.

CHARM

V

CHARM

THERE is a little village here near Cambridge the homely, summer-sounding name of which is Haslingfield. It is a straggling hamlet of white-walled, straw-thatched cottages, among orchards and old elms, full of closes of meadow-grass, and farmsteads with ricks and big-timbered barns. It has a solid, upstanding Tudor church, with rather a grand tower, and four solid corner turrets; and it has, too, its little bit of history in the manor-house, of which only one high-shouldered wing remains, with tall brick chimneys. It stands up above some mellow old walls, a big dove-cote, and a row of ancient fish-ponds. Here Queen Elizabeth once spent a night upon the wing. Close behind the village, a low wold, bare and calm, with a belt or two of trees, runs steeply up.

The simplest and quietest place imaginable, with a simple and remote life, hardly aware of itself,

flowing tranquilly through it; yet this little village, by some felicity of grouping and gathering, has the rare and incomparable gift of charm. I cannot analyze it, I cannot explain it, yet at all times and in all lights, whether its orchards are full of bloom and scent, and the cuckoo flutes from the holt down the soft breeze, or in the bare and leafless winter, when the pale sunset glows beyond the wold among the rifted cloud-banks, it has the wonderful appeal of beauty, a quality which cannot be schemed for or designed, but which a very little mishandling can sweep away. The whole place has grown up out of common use, trees planted for shelter, orchards set for fruit, houses built for convenience. Only in the church and the manor is there any care for seemliness and stateliness. There are a dozen villages round about it which have sprung from the same needs, the same history; and yet these have missed the unconsidered charm of Haslingfield, which man did not devise, nor does nature inevitably bring, but which is instantly recognizable and strangely affecting.

Such charm seems to arise partly out of a subtle orderliness and a simple appropriateness, and partly from a blending of delicate and pathetic

elements in a certain unascertained proportion. It seems to touch unknown memories into life, and to give a hint of the working of some half-whimsical, half-tenderly concerned spirit, brooding over its work, adding a touch of form here and a dash of color there, and pleased to see, when all is done, that it is good.

If one looks closely at life, one sees the same quality in humanity, in men and women, in books and pictures, and yet one cannot tell what goes to the making of it. It seems to be a thing which no energy or design can capture, but which alights here and there, blowing like the wind at will. It is not force or originality or inventiveness; very often it is strangely lacking in any masterful quality at all; but it has always just the same wistful appeal, which makes one desire to understand it, to take possession of it, to serve it, to win its favor. It is as when the child in Francis Thompson's poem seems to say, "I hire you for nothing." That is exactly it: there is nothing offered or bestowed, but one is at once magically bound to serve it for love and delight. There is nothing that one can expect to get from it, and yet it goes very far down into the soul; it is behind the mad-

dening desire which certain faces, hands, voices, smiles excite — the desire to possess, to claim, to know even that no one else can possess or claim them, which lies at the root of half the jealous tragedies of life.

Some personalities have charm in a marvelous degree, and if, as one looks into the old records of life, one discovers figures that seem to have laid an inexplicable hold on their circles, and to have passed through life in a tempest of applause and admiration, one may be sure that charm has been the secret.

Take the case of Arthur Hallam, the inspirer of "In Memoriam." I remember hearing Mr. Gladstone say, with kindled eye and emphatic gesture, that Arthur Hallam was the most perfect being physically, morally, and intellectually that he had ever seen or hoped to see. He said, I remember, with a smile: "The story of Milnes Gaskell's friendship with Hallam was curious. You must know that people fell in love very easily in those days; there was a Miss E—— of whom Hallam was enamored, and Milnes Gaskell abandoned his own addresses to her in favor of Hallam, in order to gain his friendship."

Yet the portrait of Hallam which hangs in the provost's house at Eton represents a rosy, solid, rather heavy-featured young man, with a flushed face,— Mr. Gladstone said that this was caused by overwork,— who looks more like a young country bumpkin on the opera-bouffe stage than an intellectual archangel.

Odder still, the letters, poems, and remains of Hallam throw no light on the hypnotic effect he produced; they are turgid, elaborate, and wholly uninteresting; nor does he seem to have been entirely amiable. Lord Dudley told Francis Hare that he had dined with Henry Hallam, the historian, who was Arthur Hallam's father, in the company of the son, in Italy, adding, "It did my heart good to sit by and hear how the son snubbed the father, remembering how often the father had unmercifully snubbed me."

There is a hint of beauty in the dark eyes and the down-dropped curve of the mobile lip in the portrait, and one need not quote "In Memoriam" to prove how utterly the charm of Hallam subjugated the Tennyson circle. Wit, swiftness of insight, beauty, lovableness — all seem to have been there; and it remains that Arthur Hallam was

worshiped and adored by his contemporaries with a fierce jealousy of devotion. Nothing but the presence of an overmastering charm can explain this conspiracy of praise; and perhaps there is no better proof of it than that his friends could detect genius in letters and poems which seem alike destitute of promise and performance.

There is another figure of earlier date who seems to have had the same magnetic gift in an even more preëminent degree. There is a portrait by Lawrence of Lord Melbourne that certainly gives a hint, and more than a hint, of the extraordinary charm which enveloped him; the thick, wavy hair, the fine nose, the full, but firmly molded, lips, are attractive enough. But the large, dark eyes under strongly marked eyebrows, which are at once pathetic, passionate, ironical, and mournful, evoke a singular emotion. Every gift that men hold to be advantageous was showered upon Melbourne. He was well born, wealthy, able; he was full of humor, quick to grasp a subject, an omnivorous reader and student, a famous sportsman. He won the devotion of both men and women. His marriage with the lovely and brilliant Lady Caroline Ponsonby, whose heart was broken and mind shat-

tered by her hopeless passion for Byron, showed how he could win hearts. There is no figure of all that period of whom one would rather possess a personal memoir. Yet despite all his fame and political prestige, he was an unhappy, dissatisfied man, who tasted every experience and joy of life, and found that there was nothing in it.

The dicta of his that are preserved vibrate between cynicism, shrewdness, wisdom, and tenderness. "Stop a bit," he said, as the cabinet went down-stairs after a dinner to discuss the corn laws. "Is it to lower the price of bread or is n't it? It does n't much matter which, but we must all say the same thing." Yet, after all, it is the letters and diaries of Queen Victoria that reveal the true secret of Melbourne's charm. His relation to his girl sovereign is one of the most beautiful things in latter-day history. Melbourne loved her half paternally, half chivalrously, while it is evident that the queen's affection for her gallant and attractive premier was of a quality which escaped her own perception. He humored her, advised her, watched over her; in return, she idolized him, noted down his smallest sayings, permitted him to behave and talk just as he would. She lovingly

records his little ways and fancies — how he fell asleep after dinner, how he always took two apples, and hid one in his lap while he ate the other.

"I asked him if he meant to eat it. He thought not, and said, 'But I like to have the power of doing so.' I observed, had n't he just as well the power of doing so when the apples were in the dish on the table? He laughed and said, 'Not the *full* power.'"

Melbourne was full of prejudices and whims and hatreds, but his charity was boundless, and he always had a good word for an enemy. He excused the career of Henry VIII to the queen by saying, "You see, those women bothered him so." And when he was superseded by Peel, he combated the queen's dislike of her new premier, and did his best to put Peel in a favorable light. When Peel made his first appearance at Windsor, shy and awkward, and holding himself like a dancing-master, it was Melbourne who broke the awkward pause by going up to Peel, and saying in an undertone, "For God's sake, go and talk to the queen!" When I was privileged to work through all Melbourne's letters to the queen, so carefully preserved and magnificently bound, I was greatly touched by

the sweetness and tenderness of them, the gentle ironical flavor, the delicate freedom, and the little presents and remembrances they exchanged up to the end.

Melbourne can hardly be called a very great man,— he had not the purpose or tenacity for that, and he thought both too contemptuously and too indulgently of human nature,— but I know of no historical figure who is more wholly transfused and penetrated by the aroma of charm. Everything that he did and said had some distinction and unusualness: perceptive observation, ripe wisdom, and, with it all, the petulant attractiveness of the spoiled and engaging child. And yet even so, one is baffled, because it is not the profundity or the gravity of what he said that impresses; it is rather the delicate and fantastic turn he gave to a thought or a phrase that makes his simplest deductions from life, his most sensible bits of counsel, appear to have something fresh and interesting about them, though prudent men have said much the same before, and said it heavily and solemnly.

Not that charm need be whimsical and freakish, though it is perhaps most beautiful when there is something of the child about it, something naïve

and unconventional. There are men, of whom I think that Cardinal Newman was preëminently one, who seem to have had the appeal of a pathetic sort of beauty and even helplessness. Newman seems to have always been surprised to find himself so interesting to others, and perhaps rather overshadowed by the responsibility of it. He was romantically affectionate, and the tears came very easily at the call of emotion. Such incidents as that when Newman said good-by to his bare room at Littlemore, and kissed the doorposts and the bed in a passion of grief, show what his intensity of feeling might be.

It is not as a rule the calm and controlled people who have this attractiveness for others; it is rather those who unite with an enchanting kind of playfulness an instinct to confide in and to depend upon protective affection. Very probably there is some deep-seated sexual impulse involved, however remotely and unconsciously, in this species of charm. It is the appeal of the child that exults in happiness, claims it as a right, uses it with a pretty petulance,— like the feigned enmity of the kitten and the puppy,— and when it is clouded over, requires tearfully that it shall be restored. That may seem

an undignified comparison for a prince of the church. But Newman was artist first, and theologian a long way afterward; he needed comfort and approval and even applause; and he evoked, together with love and admiration, the compassion and protective chivalry of his friends. His writings have little logical or intellectual force; their strength is in their ineffable and fragrant charm, their ordered grace, their infinite pathos.

The Greek word for this subtle kind of beauty is χάρις, and the Greeks are worth hearing on the subject, because they, of all the nations that ever lived, were penetrated by it, valued it, looked out for it, worshiped it. The word itself has suffered, as all large words are apt to suffer, when they are transferred to another language, because the big, ultimate words of every tongue connote a number of ideas which cannot be exactly rendered by a single word in another language. Let us be mildly philological for a moment, and realize that the word χάρις in Greek is the substantive of which the verb is χαίρω, to rejoice. We translate the word χάρις by the English word "grace," which means, apart from its theological sense, a rich endowment of charm and beauty, a thing which is

essentially a gift, and which cannot be captured by taking thought. When we say that a thing is done with a perfect grace, we mean that it seems entirely delightful, appropriate, seemly, and beautiful. It pleases every sense; it is done just as it should be done, easily, courteously, gently, pleasantly, with a confidence which is yet modest, and with a rightness that has nothing rigid or unamiable about it. To see a thing so done, whatever it may be, leaves us with an envious desire that we might do the thing in the same way. It seems easy and effortless, and the one thing worth doing; and this is where the moral appeal of beauty lies, in the contagious sort of example that it sets. But when we clumsily translate the word by "grace," we lose the root idea of the word, which has a certain joyfulness about it. A thing done with χάρις is done as a pleasure, naturally, eagerly, out of the heart's abundance; and that is the appeal of things so done to the ordinary mind, that they seem to well up out of a beautiful and happy nature, as the clear spring rises from the sandy floor of the pool. The act is done, or the word spoken, out of a tranquil fund of joy, not as a matter of duty, or in reluctant obedience to a

principle, but because the thing, whatever it is, is the joyful and beautiful thing to do.

And so the word became the fundamental idea of the Christian life: the grace of God was the power that floods the whole of the earlier teaching of the gospel, before the conflict with the ungracious and suspicious world began — the serene, uncalculating life, lived simply and purely, not from any grim principle of asceticism, but because it was beautiful to live so. It stood for the joy of life, as opposed to its cares and anxieties and ambitions; it was beautiful to share happiness, to give things away, to live in love, to find joy in the fresh mintage of the earth, the flowers, the creatures, the children, before they were clouded and stained by the strife and greed and enmity of the world. The exquisite quality of the first soft touches of the gospel story comes from the fact that it all rose out of a heart of joy, an overflowing certainty of the true values of life, a determination to fight the uglier side of life by opposing to it a simplicity and a sweetness that claimed nothing, and exacted nothing but a right to the purest sort of happiness — the happiness of a loving circle of friends, where the sacrifice of personal desires is

the easiest and most natural thing in the world, because such sacrifice is both the best reward and the highest delight of love. It was here that the strength of primitive Christianity lay, that it seemed the possession of a joyful secret that turned all common things, and even sorrow and suffering, to gold. If a man could rejoice in tribulation, he was on his way to be invulnerable.

It is not a very happy business to trace the decay of a great and noble idea; but one can catch a glimpse of the perversion of "grace" in the hands of our Puritan ancestors, when it became a combative thing, which instead of winning the enemies of the Lord by its patient sweetness, put an edge on the sword of holiness, and enabled the stanch Christian to hew the Amalekites hip and thigh; so that the word, which had stood for a perfectly peaceful and attractive charm, became the symbol of righteous persecution, and flowered in cries of anguish and spilled blood.

We shall take a long time before we can crawl out of the shadow of that dark inheritance; but there are signs in the world of an awakening brotherliness; and perhaps we may some day come back to the old truth, so long mishandled, that the

essence of all religion is a spirit of beauty and of joy, bent on giving rather than receiving; and so at last we may reach the perception that the fruitful strength of morality lies not in its terror, its prohibitions, its coercions, but in its good-will, its tolerance, its dislike of rebuke and censure, its rapturous acceptance of all generous and chivalrous and noble ways of living.

And thus, then, I mean by charm not a mere superficial gracefulness which can be learned, as good manners are learned, through a certain code of behavior, but a thing which is the flower and outward sign of a beautiful attitude to life; an eagerness to welcome everything which is fine and fresh and unstained; that turns away the glance from things unlovely and violent and greedy not in a disapproving or a self-righteous spirit, because it is respectable to be shocked, but in a sense of shame and disgrace that such cruel and covetous and unclean things should be. If one takes a figure like that of St. Francis of Assisi, who for all the superstition and fanaticism with which the record is intermingled, showed a real reflection and restoration of the old Christian joy of life, we shall see that he had firm hold of the secret. St.

Francis's love of nature, of animals, of flowers, of children, his way of breaking into song about the pleasant things of earth, his praise of "our sister the Water, because she is very serviceable to us and humble and clean," show the outrush of an overpowering joy. He had the courage to do what very few men and women ever dare to do, and that is to make a clean sweep of property and its complications; but even so, the old legend distorts some of this into a priggish desire to set a good example, to warn and rebuke and improve the occasion. But St. Francis's asceticism is the only kind of asceticism that has any charm, the self-denial, namely, that springs from a sense of enjoyment, and is practised from a feeling of its beauty, and not as a matter of timid and anxious calculation. It is true that St. Francis was haunted by the medieval nightmare of the essential vileness of the body, and spurred it too hard. But apart from this, one recognizes in him a poet, and a man of ineffable charm, who found the company of sinners at least as attractive as the company of saints, for the simple reason that the sinner is often enough well meaning and humble, and is spared at least the ugliness of respectable self-righteousness,

which is of all things most destructive of the sense of proportion, and most divorced from natural joy. St. Francis took human nature as he found it, and recognized that failure has a beauty which is denied to success, for the simple reason that conscious failure makes a man both grateful and affectionate, while success too often makes him cold and hard.

And there is thus a wonderful fragrance about all that St. Francis did and said, though he must have been sorely tried by his stupid and pompous followers, who constantly misunderstood and misrepresented him, and dragged into the light what was meant to be the inner secret of his soul. There are few figures in the roll of saints so profoundly beautiful and touching as that of St. Francis, because he had in a preëminent degree that childlike freshness and trustfulness which is the secret of all charm.

Charm is of course not the same thing as beauty, but only a subdivision of it. There are many things in nature and in art, from the Matterhorn to "Samson Agonistes," that have no charm, but that appeal to a different range of emotions, the sublime, the majestic, the awe-inspiring, things in

the presence of which we are hardly at ease; but charm is essentially a comfortable quality, something that one gathers to one's heart, and if there is a mystery about it, as there is about all beautiful things, it is not a mystery of which one would be afraid to know the secret. Charm is the quality which makes one desire to linger upon one's pilgrimage, that cries to the soul to halt, to rest, to be content. It is intimate, reassuring, and appealing; and the shadow of it is the gentle pathos, which is in itself half a luxury of sadness, in the thought that sweet things must have an end. As Herrick wrote to the daffodils:

> Stay, stay
> Until the hasting day
> Has run
> But to the evensong;
> And, having prayed together, we
> Will go with you along.
>
> We have short time to stay, as you,
> We have as short a spring;
> As quick a growth to meet decay
> As you, or anything.

In such a mood as that there is no sense of terror or despair at the quick-coming onset of death;

no more dread of what may be than there is when the hamlet, with its little roofs and tall trees, is folded in the arms of the night, as the sunset dies behind the hill. Beauty may be a terrible thing, as in the sheeted cataract, with all its boiling eddies, or in the falling of the lightning from the womb of the cloud. There is desolation behind that, gigantic movement, ruthless force; but charm comes like a signal of security and good-will, and even its inevitable end is lit with something of mercy and quietness. The danger of charm is that it is the mother of sentiment; and the danger of sentiment is not that it is untrue, but that it takes from us the sense of proportion; we begin to be unable to do without our little scenes and sunsets; and the eye gets so used to dwelling upon the flower-strewn pleasaunce, with its screening trees, that it cannot bear to face the far horizon, with its menace of darkness and storm.

Yet we are very grateful to those who can teach us to turn our eyes to the charm which surrounds us, and a life which is lived without such perception is apt to be a rough and hurrying thing, even though it may also be both high and austere. Like most of life, the true success lies in not choos-

ing one force and neglecting another, but in an expectant kind of compromise. The great affairs and facts of life flash upon us, whether we will or no; and even the man whose mind is bent upon the greatest hopes and aims may find strength and consolation in the lesser and simpler delights. Mighty spirits like, let us say, Carlyle and Ruskin, were not hampered or distracted from their further quest by the microscopic eye, the infinite zest for detail, which characterized both. No one ever spoke so finely as Carlyle of the salient features of moorland and hill, and the silence so deep that it was possible to hear the far-off sheep cropping the grass; no one ever noted so instantaneously the vivid gesture or the picturesque turn of speech, or dwelt more intently upon the pathetic sculpture of experience seen in the old humble workaday faces of country-folk. No one ever delighted more ecstatically than Ruskin in the color of the amber cataract, with its soft, translucent rims, its flying spray, or in the dim splendors of some half-faded fresco, or in the intricate façade of the crumbling, crag-like church front. But they did not stay there; indeed, Carlyle, in his passionate career among verities and forces, hardly

took enough account of the beauty so patiently entwined with mortal things; while Ruskin's sharpest agonies were endured when he found, to his dismay, that men and women could not be induced by any appeal or invective to heed the message of beauty.

It is true that, however we linger, however passionately we love the small, sweet, encircling joys and delights of life, the tragic experience comes to us, whether we will or no. None escapes. And thus our care must be not to turn our eyes away from what in sterner moments we are apt to think mere shows and vanities, but to use them serenely and temperately. St. Augustine, in a magnificent apologue upon the glories and subtleties of light, can only end by the prayer that his heart may not thereby be seduced from heavenly things; but that is the false kind of asceticism, and it is nothing more than a fear of life, if our only concern with it is to shun and abhor the joy it would fain give us. But we may be sure that life has a meaning for us in its charm and loveliness; not the whole meaning, but still an immense significance. To make life into a continuous flight, a sad expectancy, a perpetual awe, is wilfully to select one

range of experiences and to neglect its kindness and its good-will. We may grow weak in our sentiment if we make a tragedy out of life, if we cannot bear to have our comfortable arrangements disordered, our little circle of pleasures broken through. The triumph is to be ready for the change, and to know that if the perfect summer day comes to an end, the power that shaped it so, and made the heart swift to love it, has yet larger surprises and glories in store. If we do that, then the charm of life takes its place in our spirits as the evidence of something joyful, wistful, pleasant, bound up with the essence of things; if it disappears, like the gold or azure thread of the tapestry, it is only to emerge in the pattern farther on; and the victory is not to attach ourselves to the particular touches of beauty and fineness which we see in the familiar scene and the well-loved circle, but to recognize beauty as a spirit, a quality which is forever making itself felt, forever beckoning and whispering to us, and which will not fail us even if for a time the urgent wind drives us far into the night and the storm, among the crash of the breakers, and the scream of loud winds over the sea.

SUNSET

VI

SUNSET

THE liquid kindling of the twilight, the western glow of clear-burning fires, bringing no weariness of heat but the exquisite coolness of darkling airs, is of all the ceremonial of the day the most solemn and sacred moment. The dawn has its own splendors, but it brightens out of secret mists and folded clouds into the common light of day, when the burden must be resumed and the common business of the world renewed again. But the sunset wanes from glory and majesty into the stillness of the star-hung night, when tired eyes may close in sleep, and rehearse the mystery of death; and so the dying down of light, with the suspension of daily activities, is of the nature of a benediction. Dawn brings the consecration of beauty to a new episode of life, bidding the soul to remember throughout the toil and eagerness of the day that the beginning was made in the inno-

cent onrush of dewy light; but when the evening comes, the deeds and words of the daylight are irrevocable facts, and the mood is not one of forward-looking hope and adventure, but of unalterable memory, and of things dealt with so and not otherwise, which nothing can henceforward change or modify. If in the morning we feel that we have power over life, in the evening we know that, whether we have done ill or well, life's power over ourselves has been asserted, and that thus and thus the record must stand.

And so the mood of evening is the larger and the wiser mood, because we must think less of ourselves and more of God. In the dawn it seems to us that we have our part to play and that nothing, not even God, can prevent us from exercising our will upon the life about us; but in the evening we begin to wonder how much, after all, we have the strength to effect; we see that even our desires and impulses have their roots far back in a past which no restlessness of design or energy can touch; till we end by thankfulness that we have been allowed to feel and to experience the current of life at all. I sat the other day by the bedside of an old and gracious lady, the widow of a great artist, whose

works with all their shapely form and dusky flashes of rich color hung on the walls of her room. She had lived for many years in the forefront of a great fellowship of art and endeavor; she had seen and known intimately all the greatest figures in the art and literature of the last generation; and she was awaiting with perfect serenity and dignity the close. She said to me with a deep emotion, "Ah, the only thing that I desire is that I may continue to *feel* — that brings suffering in abundance with it, but while we suffer we are at least alive. Once or twice in my life I have felt the numbness of anguish, when a blow had fallen, and I could not even suffer. That is the only thing which I dread — not death, nor silence, but only the obliteration of feeling and love." That was a wonderful saying, full of life and energy. She did not wish to recall the old days, nor hanker after them with an unsatisfied pain; and I saw that an immortal spirit dwelt in that frail body, like a bird in an outworn cage.

However much one may enjoy the onrush and vividness of life — and I for one find that, though vitality runs now in more definite and habitual channels — yet I feel that though one has done

with making experiments, though one wastes less time in undertaking doubtful enterprises, yet there is a great gain in the concentration of energy, and in the certain knowledge of what one's definite work really is.

Far from finding the spring and motion of life diminished, I feel that the current of it runs with a sharper and clearer intensity, because I have learned my limitations, and expend no energy in useless enterprises. I have learned what the achievements are which come joyfully bearing their sheaves with them, and what are the trivial and fruitless aims. When I was younger I desired to be known and recognized and deferred to. I wanted to push my way discreetly into many companies, to produce an impression, to create a sense of admiration. Now as the sunset draws nearer, and the enriched light, withdrawn from the further horizon, begins to pulsate more intensely in the quarter whence it must soon altogether fade, I begin to see that vague and widely ranging effects have a thinness and shallowness about them. It is a poor thing just to see oneself transiently reflected in a hundred little mirrors. There is no touch of reality about that. Little greetings,

casual flashes of courteous talk, petty compliments — these are things that fade as soon as they are born. The only thing worth doing is a little bit of faithful and solid work, something given away which costs one real pain, a few ideas and thoughts worked patiently out, a few hearts really enlivened and inspirited. And then, too, comes the consciousness that much of one's cherished labor is of no use at all except to oneself; that work is not a magnificent gift presented to others, but a wholesome privilege conceded to oneself, that the love which brought with it but a momentary flash of self-regarding pleasure is not love at all, and that only love which means suffering — not delicate regrets and luxurious reveries, but hard and hopeless pain — is worth the name of love at all. Those are some of the lights of sunset, the enfolding gleams that are on their way to death, and which yet testify that the light which wanes and lapses here, drawn reluctantly away from dark valley and somber woodland, is yet striding ahead over dewy uplands and breaking seas, past the upheaving shoulder of the world.

But best of all the gifts of sunset to the spirit is the knowledge that behind all the whirling web of

daylight, beyond all the noise and laughter and appetite and drudgery of life, lies the spirit of beauty that cannot be always revealed or traced in the louder and more urgent pageantry of the day. The sunset has the power of weaving a subtle and remote mystery over a scene that by day has nothing to show but a homely and obvious animation. I was traveling the other day and passed, just as the day began to decline, through the outskirts of a bustling, seaport town. It had all the interest and curiosity of life. Crowded warehouses, swinging up straw-packed crates into projecting pent-houses; steamers with red-stained funnels, open-mouthed tubes, gangways, staircase-heads, dangling boats, were moored by bustling wharves. One could not divine the use of half the strangely shaped objects with which the scene was furnished, or what the business could be of all the swarming and hurrying figures. Deep sea-horns blew and whistles shrilled, orders were given, hands waved. It was life at its fullest and busiest, but it was life demanding and enforcing its claim and concealing its further purposes. It was just a glimpse of something full of urgent haste, but pleasanter to watch than to mix with; then we

passed through a wilderness of little houses, street after street, yard after yard. Presently we were rushing away from it all past a lonely sea-creek that ran far up into the low-lying land. That had a more silent life of its own; old dusky hulks lay at anchor in the channel; the tide ebbed away from mudflats and oozy inlets, the skeletons of worn-out boats stood up out of the weltering clay. Gradually, as the sun went down among orange stains and twisted cloud-wreaths, the creek narrowed and beyond lay a mysterious promontory with shadowy woods and low bare pasture lands with here and there a tower standing up or a solitary sea-mark, or a hamlet of clustered houses by the water's edge, while the water between grew paler and stiller, reflecting the wan green of the sky. It is not easy to describe the effect of this scene, thus magically transfigured, upon the mind; but it is a very real and distinct emotion, though its charm depends upon the fact that it shifts the reality of the world to a further point, away from the definite shapes and colors, the tangible and visible relations of things, which become for an instant like a translucent curtain through which one catches a glimpse of a larger and more beautiful

reality. The specific hopes, fears, schemes, designs, purposes of life, suddenly become an interlude and not an end. They do not become phantasmal and unreal, but they are known for a brief moment as only temporary conditions, which by their hardness and sharpness obscure a further and larger life, existing before they existed, and extending itself beyond their momentary impact and influence. All that one is engaged in busily saying and doing and enacting is seen in that instant to be only as a ripple on a deep pool. It does not make the activities of life either futile or avoidable; it only gives the mystical sense, that however urgent and important they may seem, there is something further, larger, greater, beyond them, of which they are a real part, but only a part.

Moreover, in my own experience, the further secret, whatever it is, is by no means wholly joyful and not at all light-hearted. It seems to me at such times that it is rather solemn, profound, serious, difficult, and sad. But it is not a heavy or depressing sadness — indeed, the thought is at once hopeful and above everything beautiful. It has nothing that is called sentimental about it. It is

not full of rest and content and peace; it is rather strong and stern, though it is gentle too; but it is the kind of gentle strength which faces labor and hardness, not troubled by them, and indeed knowing that only thus can the secret be attained. There is no hint of easy, childlike happiness about the mood; there is a happiness in it, but it is an old and a wise happiness that has learned how to wait and is fully prepared for endurance. There is no fretfulness in it, no chafing over dreams unrealized, no impatience or disappointment. But it does not speak of an untroubled bliss — rather of a deep, sad and loving patience, which expects no fulfilment, no easy satisfaction of desire.

It always seems to me that the quality which most differentiates men is the power of recognizing the Unknown. Some natures acquiesce buoyantly or wretchedly in present conditions, and cannot in any circumstances look beyond them; some again have a deep distaste for present conditions whatever they are; and again there are some who throw themselves eagerly and freely into present conditions, use experience, taste life, enjoy, grieve, dislike, but yet preserve a consciousness of something above and beyond. The idealist is one who has a

need in his soul to worship, to admire, to love. The mistake made too often by religious idealists is to believe that this sense of worship can only be satisfied by religions and, even more narrowly, by ecclesiastical observance. But there are many idealists to whom religion with its scientific creeds and definite dogmas seems only a dreary sort of metaphysic, an attempt to define what is beyond definition. But there are some idealists who find the sense of worship and the consciousness of an immortal power in the high passions and affections of life. To these the human form, the spirit that looks out from human eyes, are the symbols of their mystery. Others find it in art and music, others again in the endless loveliness of nature, her seas and streams, her hills and woods. Others again find it in visions of helping and raising mankind out of base conditions, or in scientific investigation of the miraculous constitution of nature. It has a hundred forms and energies; but the one feature of it is the sense of some vast and mysterious power, which holds the world in its grasp — a power which can be dimly apprehended and even communicated with. Prayer is one manifestation of this sense, though prayer is but a formulation

of one's desires for oneself and for the world.

But the essential and vital part of the mystery is not what the soul asks of it, but the signals which it makes to the soul. And here I am but recording my own experience when I say that the lights and gleams of sunset, its golden inlets and cloud-ripples, the dusky veil it weaves about the world, is for my own spirit the solemnity which effects for me what I believe that the mass effects for a devoted Catholic — the unfolding in hints and symbols of the mysteries of God. An unbeliever may look on at a mass and see nothing but the vesture and the rite, a drama of woven paces and waving hands, when a believer may become aware of the very presence of the divine. And the sunset has for me that same unveiling of the beauty of God; it illumines and transfigures life; it shows me visibly and sacredly that beauty pure and stainless runs from end to end of the universe, and calls upon me to adore it, to prostrate myself before its divine essence. The fact that another may see it carelessly and indifferently makes no difference. It only means that not thus does he perceive God. But, for myself, I know no experience more wholly and deeply religious than when I

pass in solitude among deep stream-fed valleys, or over the wide fenland or through the familiar hamlet, and see the dying day flame and smolder far down in the west among cloudy pavilions or in tranquil spaces of clear sky. Then the well-known land whose homely, day-long energies I know seems to gather itself together into a far and silent adoration, to commit itself trustfully and quietly to God, to receive His endless benediction, and in that moment to become itself eternal in a soft harmony of voiceless praise and passionate desire.

THE HOUSE OF PENGERSICK

VII

THE HOUSE OF PENGERSICK

THERE are days — perhaps it is well that they are not more common — when by some singular harmony of body and spirit, every little sound and sight strike on the senses with a peculiar sharpness and distinctness of quality, have a keen and racy savor, and come as delightfully home to the mind as cool well-water to thirsty lips. Everything seems in place, in some well-designed combination or symphony of the senses; and more than that — the sound, the sight, whatever it be, sets free a whole train of far-reaching and mysterious thoughts, that seem to flash the secret of life on the spirit — or rather hint it in a tender, smiling way, as a mother nods a delighted acquiescence to the eager questions of a child face to face with some happy surprise. That day of January was just such a day to me, as we drove along the dreary road from Marazion to Helston,

by ruined mine-towers with their heaps of scoriæ, looking out to the sea, on the one hand, and on the other to the low, monotonous slopes of tilth and pasture, rising and falling like broad-backed waves, with here and there a wild and broken wood of firs, like the forest of Broceliande, or a holt of wind-brushed, fawn-colored ash trees, half empurpled by the coming of spring, in some rushy dingle by the stream side.

It was a cool gray day, with a haze over the sea, the gusty sky of yesterday having hardened into delicate flakes of pearly cloud, like the sand on some wave-beaten beach. It was all infinitely soft and refreshing to the eye, that outspread pastoral landscape, seen in a low dusk, like the dusk of a winter dawn.

It was then that in a little hollow to our right we saw the old House of Pengersick — what a grim, lean, hungry sort of name! — We made our way down along a little road, the big worn flints standing up out of the gravel, by brakes of bramble, turf-walls where the ferns grew thick, by bits of wild upland covered with gorse and rusty bracken, and down at last to the tiny hamlet — four or five low white houses, in little gardens

where the escallonia grew thick and glossy, the purple veronica bloomed richly, and the green fleshy mesembryanthemum tumbled and dripped over the fences. The tower itself rose straight out of a farmyard, where calves stared through the gate, pigs and hens routed and picked in the mire. I have seldom seen so beautiful a bit of building: it was a great square battlemented tower, with a turret, the mullioned windows stopped up with sea-worn boulders. The whole built of very peculiar stone, of a dark gray tinge, weathered on the seaward side to a most delicate silvery gray, with ivy sprawling over it in places, like water shot out from a pail over a stone floor. There were just a few traces of other buildings in the sheds and walls, and bits of carved stonework piled up in a rockery. No doubt the little farm itself and the cottages were all built out of the ruins.

From the tower itself — it has a few bare rooms filled with farm lumber — one can see down the valley to the long gray line of the Prah sands, and the low dusky cliffs of Hove point, where the waves were breaking white.

I suppose it needed to be a strong place. The Algiers and Sallee pirates used to make descents

upon this coast till a comparatively recent date. As late as 1636 they kidnapped seven boats and forty-two fishermen off the Manacles, none of whom were ever heard of again. Eighty fishermen from Looe were captured in one day, and there is a complaint extant from the justices of Cornwall to the lord lieutenant that in one year Cornwall had lost above a thousand mariners thus!

But there was also another side to the picture; the natives all along this coast were dreadful wreckers and plunderers themselves, and made little account of burning a ship and knocking the survivors on the head. The very parish, Germoe, in which Pengersick stands, had as bad a name as any in Cornwall:

> God keep us from rocks and shelving sands
> And save us from Breage and Germoe men's hands,

runs the old rime. And there is an evil old story of how a treasure ship, the *St. Andrew* of Portugal, went ashore at Gunwalloe in January, 1526. There were thousands of cakes of copper and silver on board, plate, pearls, jewels, chains, brooches, arras, satins, velvets, sets of armor for the King of Portugal, and a huge chest of coined gold.

The wretched crew got most of the treasure to land and stacked it on the cliffs, when John Milliton of Pengersick, with a St. Aubyn and a Godolphin, came down with sixty armed men, and took all the treasure away. Complaints were made, and the three gentlemen protested that they had but ridden down to save the crew, had found them destitute, and had even given them money. But I daresay the big guest-chamber of Pengersick was hung with Portuguese arras for many a long year afterwards.

The Millitons died out, and their land passed by purchase or marriage to the descendants of another of the three pious squires, Godolphin of Godolphin — and belongs to-day to his descendant, the Duke of Leeds.

One would have thought that men could not have borne to live so, in such deadly insecurity. But probably they troubled their heads little about the pirates, kept the women and children at home, and set a retainer on the cliff in open weather, to scan the offing for the light-rigged barques, while poorer folk took their chance. We live among a different set of risks now, and think little of them, as the days pass.

The life of the tower was simple and hardy enough — some fishing and hunting, some setting of springes on the moor for woodcock and rabbits, much farmwork, solid eating and drinking, and an occasional carouse — a rude, plentiful, healthy life, perhaps not as far removed from our own as we like to believe.

But the old tower spoke to me to-day of different things, of the buried life of the past, of the strange drift of human souls through the world for their little span of life, love, and sorrow, and all so pathetically ignorant of what goes before and follows after, why it so comes about, and what is the final aim of the will we blindly serve. Here was a house of men, I said to myself, with the same hopes and fears and fancies as myself, and yet none of them, could I recall them, could give me any reason for the life we thus hurriedly live, so much of it entirely joyful and delightful, so much of it distasteful and afflicting. On a sunny day of summer, with the sea a sapphire blue, set with great purple patches, the scent of the gorse in the air, the sound of the clear stream in one's ears, what could be sweeter than to live? and even on dark days, when the wind volleys up from the sea, and

the rain dashes on the windows, and the gulls veer and sail overhead, the great guest room with its fire of wreckage, the women working, the children playing about, must have been a pleasant place enough. But even to the strongest and boldest of the old squires the end came, as the wagon with the coffin jolted along the stony lane, and the bell of Germoe came faintly over the hill.

But I could not think of that to-day, with a secret joy in my heart; I thought rather of the splendid mystery of life, that seems to screen from us something more gracious still — the steep velvet sky full of star-dust, the flush of spring in sunlit orchards, the soft, thunderous echoes of great ocean billows, the orange glow of sunset behind dark woods: all that the background of life; and then the converse of friend with friend, the intercepted glance of wondering eyes, the whispered message of the heart. All this, and a crowd of other sweet images and fancies came upon me in a rush to-day, like scents from a twilight garden, as I watched the old silvery tower stand up bluff and square, with the dark moorland behind it, and the little houses clustering about its feet.

VILLAGES

VIII

VILLAGES

I WONDER if any human being has ever expended as much sincere and unrequited love upon the little pastoral villages about Cambridge as I have. No one ever seems to me to take the smallest interest in them or to know them apart or to remember where they are. It is true that it takes a very faithful lover to distinguish instantly and impeccably between Histon, Hinxton, Hauxton, Harston, and Harlton; but to me they have all of them a perfectly distinct quality, and make a series of charming little pastoral pictures in the mind. Who shall justly and perfectly assess the beautiful claims of Great and Little Eversden? I doubt if any inhabitant of Cambridge but myself and one friend of mine, a good man and true, could do it. Yet it is as pleasant to have a connoisseurship in villages as to have a connoisseurship in wines or cigars, though it is not so regarded.

What is the charm of them? That I cannot say. It is a mystery, like the charm of all sweet things; and further, what is the meaning of love for an inanimate thing, with no individuality, no personality, no power of returning love? The charm of love is that one discerns some spirit making signals back. "I like you to be here, I trust you, I am glad to be with you, I wish to give you something, to increase your joy, as mine is increased." That, or something like that, is what one reads in the eyes and faces and gestures of those whom one dares to love. One would otherwise be sadly and mournfully alone if one could not come across the traces of something, some one whose heart leaps up and whose pulse quickens at the proximity of comrade and friend and lover. But even so there is always the thought of the parting ahead, when, after the sharing of joy, each has to go on his way alone.

Then, one may love animals; but that is a very strange love, for the man and the animal cannot understand each other. The dog may be a true and faithful comrade, and there really is nothing in the world more wonderful than the trustful love of a dog for a man. One may love a horse, I sup-

pose, though the horse is a foolish creature at best; one may have a sober friendship with a cat, though a cat does little more than tolerate one; and a bird can be a merry little playfellow: but the terror of wild animals for men has something rather dreadful about it, because it stands for many centuries of cruel wrong-doing.

And one may love, too, with a wistful sort of love the works of men, pictures, music, statues; but that, I think, is because one discerns a human figure at the end of a vista — a figure hurrying away through the ages, but whom one feels one could have loved had time and place only allowed.

But when it comes to loving trees and flowers, streams and hills, buildings and fields, what is it that happens? I have a perfectly distinct feeling about these little villages hereabouts. Some are to me like courteous strangers, some like dull and indifferent people, some like pleasant, genial folk whom I am mildly pleased to see; but with some I have a real and devoted friendship. I like visiting them, and if I cannot visit them, I think of them; when I am far away the thought of them comes across me, and I am glad to think of them

waiting there for me, nestling under their hill, the smoke going up above the apple-orchards.

One or two of them are particularly beloved because I visited them first thirty years ago, when I was an undergraduate, and the thought of the old days and the old friendships springs up again like a sweet and far-off fragrance when I enter them. Yet I do not know any of the people who live in these villages, though by dint of going there often there are a few people by whom I am recognized and saluted.

But let me take one village in particular, and I will not name it, because one ought not to publish the names of those whom one loves. What does it consist of? It straggles along a rough and ill-laid lane, under a little wold, once a sheep-walk, now long plowed up. The soil of the wold is pale, so that in the new-plowed fields there rest soft, cream-like shadows when the evening sun falls aslant. There are two or three substantial farm-houses of pale brick, comfortable old places, with sheds and ricks and cattle-byres and barns close about them. And I think it is strange that the scent of a cattle-byre, with its rich manure and its oozing pools, is not ungrateful to the human sense. It

ought to be, but it is not. It gives one, by long inheritance, no doubt, a homelike feeling.

Then there are many plastered, white-walled, irregular cottages, very quaint and pretty, perhaps a couple of centuries old, very ill built, no doubt, but enchanting to look at; there is a new schoolhouse, very ugly at present, with its smart red brick and its stone facings — ugly because it does not seem to have grown up out of the place, but to have been brought there by rail; and there are a few new yellow-brick cottages, probably much pleasanter to live in than the old ones, but with no sort of interest or charm. The whole is surrounded by little fields, orchards, closes, paddocks, and a good many great elms stand up above the house-roofs. There is one quaint old farm, with a moat and a dove-cote and a fine, old mellow brick wall surrounded by little pollarded elms, very quaint and characteristic; and then there is a big, ancient church, by whom built one cannot divine, because there is no squire in the village, and the farmers and laborers could no more build such a church now than they could build a stellar observatory. It would cost nowadays not less than ten thousand pounds, and there is no record of who

gave the money or who the architect was. It has a fine tower and a couple of solid bells; it has a few bits of good brass-work, a chandelier and some candlesticks, and it has a fine eighteenth-century tomb in a corner, with a huge slab of black basalt on the top, and a heraldic shield and a very obsequious inscription, which might apply to any one, and yet could be true of nobody. Why the particular old gentleman should want to sleep there, or who was willing to spend so much on his lying in state, no one knows, and I fear that no one cares except myself.

There are a few little bits of old glass in the church, in the traceries of the windows, just enough to show that some one liked making pretty things, and that some one else cared enough to pay for them. And then there is a solid rectory by the church, inhabited for centuries by fellows of a certain Cambridge college. I do not expect that they lived there very much. Probably they rode over on Sundays, read two services, and had a cold luncheon in between; perhaps they visited a sick parishioner, and even came over on a week-day for a marriage or a funeral; and I daresay that in the summer, when the college was deserted, they came

and lived there for a few weeks, rather bored, and longing for the warm combination room and the college port and the gossip and stir of the place.

That is really all, I think. And what is there to love in all that?

Well, it is a little space of earth in which life has been going on for I daresay a thousand years. The whole place has grown slowly up out of the love and care and work of man. Perhaps there were nothing but little huts and hovels at first, with a tiny rubble church; then the houses grew a little bigger and better. Perhaps it was emptied again by the Black Death, which took a long toll of victims hereabouts. Shepherds, plowmen, hedgers, ditchers, farmers, an ale-house-keeper, a shopkeeper or two, and a priest — that has been the village for a thousand years. Patient, stupid, toilsome, unimaginative, kindly little lives, I daresay. Not much interested in one another, ill educated, gossipy, brutish, superstitious, but surprised perhaps into sudden passions of love, and still more surprised perhaps by the joys of fatherhood and motherhood; with children of all ages growing up, pretty and engaging and dirty and amusing and naughty, fading one by one into dull and sober

age, and into decrepitude, and the churchyard at the end of all!

Well, I think all that pathetic and mysterious, and beautiful with the beauty that reality has. I want to know who all the folks were, what they looked like, what they cared about or thought about, how they made terms with pain and death, what they hoped, expected, feared, and what has become of them. Every one as urgently and vehemently and interestedly alive as I myself, and yet none of them with the slightest idea how they got there or whither they were going — the great, helpless, good-natured, passive army of men and women, pouring like a stream through the world, and borne away on the wings of the wind. They were glad to be alive, no doubt, when the sun fell on the apple-orchard, and the scent of the fruit was in the air, and the bees hummed round the blossoms, when people smile at each other and say kind and meaningless things; they were afraid, no doubt, as they lay in pain in the stuffy attics, with the night wind blustering round the chimney-stack, and hoped to be well again. Then there were occasions and treats, the Sunday dinner, the wedding, the ride in the farm-cart to Cambridge,

the visit of the married sister from her home close by. I do not suppose they knew or cared what was happening in the world. War and politics made little difference to them. They knew about the weather, they cared perhaps about their work, they liked the Sunday holiday — all very dim and simple, thoughts not expressed, feelings not uttered, experience summed up in little bits of phrases. Yet I like to think that they were pleased with the look of the place without knowing why. I don't deceive myself about all this or make it out as idyllic. I don't exactly wish to have lived thus, and I expect it was coarse, greedy, dull, ugly, a great deal of it; but though I can think fine thoughts about it, and put my thoughts into musical words, I do not honestly believe that my life, my hopes, my feelings differ very much from the experience of these old people.

Of course I have books and pictures and intellectual fancies and ideas; but that is only an elaborate game that I play, the things I notice and recognize: but I expect the old hearts and minds were at work, too, noticing and observing and recording; and all my flourish of talk and thought is only a superficial affair.

And what consecrates and lights up the little place for me, touches it with golden hues, makes it moving, touching, beautiful, is the thought of all that strange, unconscious life, the love and hate, the fear and the content, the joy and sorrow, that has surged to and fro among the thatched roofs and apple-orchards so many centuries before I came into being, and will continue when I am trodden into the dust.

When I came here first thirty years ago, exploring with a friend long dead the country-side, it was, I am sure, the same thought that made the place beautiful. I could not then put it into words; I have learned to do that since, and word-painting is a very pleasant pastime. It was a hot, bright summer day,— I recall the scent of the clover in the air — and there came on me that curious uplifting of the heart, that wonder as to what all the warmth and scent, the green-piled tree, the grazing cows, the children trotting to and fro, could possibly mean, or why it was all so utterly delightful. It was not a religious feeling, but there was a sense of a great, good-natured, beauty-loving mind behind it all — a mind very like our own, and yet even then with a shadow

striking across it — the shadow of pain and grief and hollow farewells.

I was not a very contented boy in those days, in some bewilderment of both mind and heart, having had my first experience that life could be hard and intricate. The world was sweeter to me, though not so interesting as it now is; but I had just the same deep desire as I have now, though it has not been satisfied, to find something strong and secure and permanent, some heart to trust utterly and entirely, something that could understand and comfort and explain and reassure, a power which one could clasp hands with, as a child lays its delicate finger in a strong, enfolding palm, and never be in any doubt again. It is one's weakness which is so tiring, so disappointing; and yet I do not want a careless, indifferent, brutal, healthy strength at all. It is the strength of love and peace that I want, not to be afraid, not to be troubled. It is all somewhere, I do not doubt;

Yet, oh, the place could I but find!

I have been through my village this very day. The sun was just beginning to slope to the west; the sun poured out his rays of gold from under-

neath the shadow of a great dark, up-piled cloud — the long rays which my nurse used to tell me were sucking up water, but which I believed to be the eye of God. The trees were bare, but the elm-buds were red, and the willow-rods were crimson with spring; the little stream bubbled clearly off the hill; and the cottage gardens were full of up-thrusting blades; while the mezereons were all aflame with bloom. Life moving, pausing, rushing past! I wonder. When I pass the gate, if I see the dawn of that other morning, I cannot help feeling that I shall want to see my little village again, to loiter down the lane among the white-gabled houses. Shall I be much wiser then than I am now? Shall I have seen or heard something which will set my anxious mind at rest? Who can tell me? And yet the old, gnarled apple-boughs, with the blue sky behind them, and the new-springing grass all seem to hold the secret, which I want as much to interpret and make my own as when I wandered through the hamlet under the wold more than thirty years ago.

DREAMS

IX

DREAMS

THERE is a movement nowadays among the philosophers who study the laws of thought, to lay a strong emphasis upon the phenomena of dreams; what part of us is it that enacts with such strange zest and vividness, and yet with so mysterious a disregard of ordinary motives and conventions, the pageant of dreams? Like many other things which befall us in daily life, dreams are so familiar a fact, that we often forget to wonder at the marvelousness of it all. The two points about dreams which seem to me entirely inexplicable are: firstly, that they are so much occupied with visual impressions, and secondly, that though they are all self-invented and self-produced, they yet contrive to strike upon the mind with a marvelous freshness of emotion and surprise. Let us take these two points a little more in detail.

When one awakes from a vivid dream one gen-

erally has the impression of a scene of some kind, which has been mainly received through the medium of the eye. I suppose that this varies with different people, but my own dreams are rather sharply divided into certain classes. I am oftenest a silent spectator of landscapes of ineffable beauty, such as a great river, as blue as sapphire, rolling majestically down between vast sandstone cliffs, or among wooded hills, piled thick with trees rich in blossom; or I see stately buildings crowded together among woodlands, with long carved fronts of stone and airy towers. These dreams are peculiarly uplifting and stimulating, and I wake from them with an extraordinary sense of beauty and wonder; or else I see from some window or balcony a great ceremony of some quite unintelligible kind proceeding, a procession with richly dressed persons walking or riding, or a religious pomp taking place in a dim pillared interior. All such dreams pass by in absolute silence. I have no idea where I am, nor what is happening, nor am I curious to know. No voice is upraised, and there is no one at hand to converse with.

Then again there are dreams of which the substance is animated and vivid conversation. I have

long and confidential talks with people like the Pope or the Tsar of Russia. They ask my advice, they quote my books, and I am surprised to find them so familiar and accessible. Or I am in a strange house with an unknown party of guests, and person after person comes up to tell me all kinds of interesting facts and details. Or else, as often happens to me, I meet people long since dead; I dream constantly, for instance, about my father. I see him by chance at a railway station, we congratulate ourselves upon the happy accident of meeting; he takes my arm, he talks smilingly and indulgently; and the only way in which the knowledge that he is dead affects the dream is that I feel bewildered at having seen so little of him of late, and even ask him where he has been for so long that we have not met oftener.

Very occasionally I hear music in a dream. I well remember hearing four musicians with little instruments like silver flutes play a quartet of infinite sweetness; but most of my adventures take place either among fine landscapes or in familiar conversation.

At one time, as a child, I had an often repeated dream. We were then living in an old house at

Lincoln, called the Chancery. It was a large rambling place, with some interesting medieval features, such as a stone winding staircase, a wooden Tudor screen, built into a wall, and formerly belonging to the chapel of the house. There were, moreover, certain quite unaccountable spaces, where the external measurements of passages did not correspond with the measurement of rooms within. This fact excited our childish imagination, and probably was the origin of the dream.

It always began in the same way. I would appear to be descending a staircase which led up into a lobby, and would find that a certain step rattled as I trode upon it. Upon examination the step proved to be hinged, and on opening it, the head of a staircase appeared, leading downwards. Though, as I say, the dream was often repeated, it was always with the same shock of surprise that I made the discovery. I used to squeeze in through the opening, close the step behind me, and go down the stairs; the place was dimly lighted with some artificial light, the source of which I could never discover. At the bottom a large vaulted room was visible, of great extent, fitted with iron-barred

stalls, as in a stable. These stalls were tenanted by animals; there were dogs, tigers, and lions. They were all very tame, and delighted to see me. I used to go into the stalls one by one, feed and play with the animals, and enjoy myself very much. There was never any custodian to be seen, and it never occurred to me to wonder how the animals had got there, nor to whom they belonged. After spending a long time with my menagerie, I used to return; and the only thing that seemed of importance to me was that I should not be seen leaving the place. I used to raise the step cautiously and listen, so as to be sure that there was no one about; generally in the dream some one came down the stairs over my head; and I then waited, crouched below, with a sense of delightful adventure, until the person had passed by, when I cautiously extricated myself. This dream became quite familiar to me, so that I used to hope in my mind, on going to bed, that I might be about to see the animals; but I was often disappointed, and dreamed of other things. This dream visited me at irregular intervals for I should say about two or three years, and then I had it no more; but the singular fact about it was that it always came

with the same sense of wonder and delight, and while actually dreaming it, I never realized that I had seen it before.

The only other tendency to a recurring dream that I have ever noticed was in the course of the long illness of which I have written elsewhere; my dreams were invariably pleasant and agreeable at that time; but I constantly had the experience in the course of them of seeing something of a profound blackness. Sometimes it was a man in a cloak, sometimes an open door with an intensely black space within, sometimes a bird, like a raven or a crow; oftenest of all it took the shape of a small black cubical box, which lay on a table, without any apparent lid or means of opening it. This I used to take up in my hands, and find it very heavy; but the predominance of some intensely black object, which I have never experienced before or since, was too marked to be a mere coincidence; and I have little doubt that it was some obscure symptom of my condition, and had some definite physical cause. Indeed, at the same time, I was occasionally aware of the presence of something black in waking hours, not a thing definitely seen, but existing dimly in a visual cell. After I re-

covered, this left me, and I have never seen it since.

These are the more coherent kind of dreams; but there is another kind of a vaguely anxious character, which consist of endless attempts to catch trains, or to fulfil social engagements, and are full of hurry and dismay. Or one dreams that one has been condemned to death for some unknown offense, and the time draws near; some little while ago I spent the night under these circumstances interviewing different members of the Government in a vain attempt to discover the reasons for my condemnation; they could none of them give me a specific account of the affair, and could only politely deplore that it was necessary to make an example. "Depend upon it," said Mr. Lloyd-George to me, "*substantial* justice will be done!" "But that is no consolation to me," I said. "No," he replied kindly, "it would hardly amount to that!"

But out of all this there emerges the fact that after a vivid dream, one's memory is full of pictures of things seen quite as distinctly, indeed often more distinctly, than in real life. I have a clearer recollection of certain dream-landscapes than I have of many scenes actually beheld with the eye;

and this sets me wondering how the effect is brought about, and how the memory is enabled to store what appears to be a visual impression, by some reflex action of the nerves of sight.

Then there is the second point, that of the lively emotions stirred by dreams. It would really appear that there must be two distinct personalities at work, without any connection between them, one unconsciously inventing and the other consciously observing. I dreamed not long ago that I was walking beside the lake at Riseholme, the former palace of the bishops of Lincoln, where I often went as a child. I saw that the level of the lake had sunk, and that there was a great bank of shingle between the water and the shore, on which I proceeded to pace. I was attracted by something sticking out of the bank, and on going up to it, I saw that it was the base of a curious metal cup. I pulled it out and saw that I had found a great golden chalice, much dimmed with age and weather. Then I saw that further in the bank there were a number of cups, patens, candlesticks, flagons, of great antiquity and beauty. I then recollected that I had heard as a child (this was wholly imaginary, of course) that there had once been a

great robbery of cathedral plate at Lincoln, and that one of the bishops had been vaguely suspected of being concerned in it; and I saw at once that I had stumbled on the hoard, stowed there no doubt by guilty episcopal hands — I even recollected the name of the bishop concerned.

Now as a matter of fact one part of my mind must have been ahead inventing this story, while the other part of the mind was apprehending it with astonishment and excitement. Yet the observant part of the mind was utterly unaware of the fact that I was myself originating it all. And the only natural inference would seem to be that there is a real duality of mind at work.

For when one is composing a story, in ordinary waking moments, one has the sense that one is inventing and controlling the incidents. In dreams this sense of proprietorship is utterly lost; one seems to have no power over the inventive part of the mind; one can only helplessly follow its lead, and be amazed at its creations. And yet, sometimes, in a dream of tragic intensity, as one begins to awake, a third person seems to intervene, and says reassuringly that it is only a dream. This intervention seems to disconcert the inventor, who

then promptly retires, while it brings sudden relief to the timid and frightened observer. It would seem then that the rational self reasserts itself, and that the two personalities one of which has been creating and the other observing, come in like dogs to heel.

Another very curious part of dreams is that they concern themselves so very little with the current thoughts of life. My dreams are mostly composed, as I have said, of landscapes, ceremonies, conversations, sensational adventures, muddling engagements. When I was a schoolmaster, I seldom dreamed of school; now that I am no longer a schoolmaster, I do sometimes dream of school, of trying to keep order in immense classrooms, or hurrying about in search of my form. When I had my long and dreary illness, lasting for two years, I invariably had happy dreams. Now that I am well again, I often have dreams of causeless and poignant melancholy. It is the rarest thing in the world for me to be able to connect my dreams with anything which has recently happened; I cannot say that marvelous landscapes, ceremonies, conversations with exalted personages, sensational incidents, play any considerable part in my life;

and yet these are the constituent elements in my dreams. The scientific students of psychology say that the principal stuff of dreams seems to be furnished by the early experience of life; and when they are dealing with mental ailments, they say that delusions and obsessions are often explained by the study of the dreams of diseased brains, which point as a rule either to some unfulfilled desire, or to some severe nervous shock sustained in childhood. But I cannot discern any predominant cause of my own elaborate visions; the only physical cause which seems to me to be very active in producing dreams is if I am either too hot or too cold in bed. A sudden change of temperature in the night is the one thing which seems to me quite certain to produce a great crop of dreams.

Another very curious fact about my dreams is that I am wholly deserted by any moral sense. I have stolen interesting objects, I have even killed people in dreams, without adequate cause; but I am then entirely devoid of remorse, and only anxious to escape detection. I have never felt anything of the nature of shame or regret in a dream. I find myself anxious indeed, but fertile in expedients for escaping unscathed. On the other hand, cer-

tain emotions are very active in dreams. I sometimes appear to go with a brother or sister through the rooms or gardens of a house, which on awaking proves to be wholly imaginary, and recall with my companion all sorts of pathetic and delightful incidents of childhood which seem to have taken place there.

Again, though much of my life is given to writing, I hardly ever find myself composing anything in a dream. Once I wrote a poem in my sleep, a curious Elizabethan lyric, which may be found in the Oxford Book of Verse, called "The Phœnix." It is not the sort of thing that I have ever written before or since. It came to me on the night before my birthday, in 1891, I think, when I was staying with a friend at the Dun Bull Hotel, by Hawes Water in Westmorland. I scribbled the lyric down on awaking. I afterwards added a verse, thinking the poem incomplete. I published it in a book of poems, and showed the proof to a friend, who said to me, pointing to the added stanza: "Ah, you must omit that stanza — it is quite out of keeping with the rest of the poem!"

But this is a quite unique experience, except that I once dreamed I was present at a confirmation

service, at which a very singular hymn was sung, which I recollected on waking, and which is far too grotesque to write down, being addressed, as it was, to the bishop who was to perform the rite. At the time, however, it seemed to me both moving and appropriate.

It is often said that dreams only take place either when one is just going to sleep or beginning to awake. But that is not my experience. I have occasionally been awakened suddenly by some loud sound, and on those occasions I have come out of dreams of an intensity and vividness that I have never known equaled. Neither is it true in my experience that dreamful sleep is unrefreshing. I should say it was rather the other way. Profound and heavy sleep is generally to me a sign that I am not very well; but a sleep full of happy and interesting dreams is generally succeeded by a feeling of freshness and gaiety, as if one had been both rested and well entertained.

These are only a few scattered personal experiences, and I have no philosophy of dreams to suggest. It is in my case an inherited power. My father was the most vivid and persistent dreamer I have ever met, and his dreams had a

quality of unexpectedness and interest of which I have never known the like. The dream of his, which I have told in his biography, of the finding of the grave of the horse of Titus Oates, seems to me one of the most extraordinary pieces of invention I have ever heard, because of the conversation which took place before he realized what the slab actually was.

He dreamed that he was standing in Westminster Abbey with Dean Stanley, looking at a small cracked slab of slate with letters on it. "We 've found it," said Stanley. "Yes," said my father, "and how do you account for it?" "Why," said Stanley, "I suppose it is intended to commemorate the fact that the animal innocence was not affected by the villainies of the master." "Of course!" said my father, who was still quite unaware what the inscription referred to. He then saw on the slab the letters ITI CAPITANI, and knew that the stone was one that had marked the grave of Titus Oates' horse, and that the whole inscription must have been EQUUS TITI CAPITANI,—"The horse of Titus the Captain,"— the "Captain" referring to the fact that my father then recollected that Titus Oates had been a Train-band Captain.

My only really remarkable dream containing a presentiment or rather a clairvoyance of a singular kind, hardly explicable as a mere coincidence, has occurred to me since I began this paper.

On the night of December 8, 1914, I dreamed that I was walking along a country road, between hedges. To the left was a little country house, in a park. I was proposing to call there, to see, I thought, an old friend of mine, Miss Adie Browne, who has been dead for some years, though in my dream I thought of her as alive.

I came up with four people, walking along the road in the same direction as myself. There was an elderly man, a younger man, red-haired, walking very lightly, in knickerbockers, and two boys whom I took to be the sons of the younger man. I recognized the elder man as a friend, though I cannot now remember who he appeared to be. He nodded and smiled to me, and I joined the party. Just as I did so, the younger man said, "I am going to call on a lady, an elderly cousin of mine, who lives here!" He said this to his companions, not to me, and I became aware that he was speaking of Miss Adie Browne. The older man said to me, "You have not been introduced," and then, pre-

senting the younger man, he said, "This is Lord Radstock!" We shook hands and I said, "Do you know, I am very much surprised; I understood Lord Radstock to be a much older man!"

I do not remember any more of the dream; but it had been very vivid, and when I was called, I went over it in my mind. A few minutes later, the "Times" of December 9 was brought to my bedroom, and opening it, I saw the sudden death of Lord Radstock announced. I had not known that he was ill, and indeed had never thought of him for years; but the strange thing is this, that he was a cousin of Miss Adie Browne's, and she used to tell me interesting stories about him. I do not suppose that since her death I have ever heard his name mentioned, and I had never met him. So that, as a matter of fact, when I dreamed my dream, the old Lord Radstock was dead, and his son, who is a man of fifty-four, was the new Lord Radstock. The man I saw in my dream was not, I should say, more than about forty-five; but I remember little of him, except that he had red hair.

I do not take in an evening paper, but I do not think there was any announcement of Lord Rad-

stock's illness, on the previous day; in fact his death seems to have been quite sudden and unexpected. Apart from coincidence, the rational explanation might be that my mind was in some sort of telepathic communication with that of my old and dear friend Miss Adie Browne, who is indeed often in my mind, and one would also have to presuppose that her spirit was likewise aware of her cousin Lord Radstock's death. I do not advance this as the only explanation, but it seems to me a not impossible one of a mysterious affair.

My conclusion, such as it is, would be that the rational and moral faculties are in suspense in dreams, and that it is a wholly primitive part of one's essence that is at work. The creative power seems to be very strong, and to have a vigorous faculty of combining and exaggerating the materials of memory; but it deals mainly with rather childish emotions, with shapes and colors, with impressive and distinguished people, with things marvelous and sensational, with troublesome and perplexed adventures. It does not go far in search of motives; in the train-catching dreams, for instance, I never know exactly where I am going, or what is the object of my journey; in the ceremonial

dreams, I seldom have any notion of what is being celebrated.

But what I cannot in the least understand is the complete withdrawal of consciousness from the inventive part of the mind, especially when the observant part is so eagerly and alertly aware of all that is happening. Moreover, I can never understand the curious way in which dream-experiences, so vivid at the time, melt away upon awakening. If one rehearses a dream in memory the moment one awakes, it becomes a very distinct affair. If one does not do this, it fades swiftly, and though one has a vague sense of rich adventures, half an hour later there seems to be no power whatever of recovering them.

Strangest of all, the inventive power in dreams seems to have a range and an intensity which does not exist when one is awake. I have not the slightest power, in waking life, of conceiving and visualizing the astonishing landscapes which I see in dreams. I can recall actual scenes with great distinctness, but the glowing color and the prodigious forms of my landscape visions are wholly beyond my power of thought.

Lastly, I have never had any dream of any real

or vital significance, any warning or presentiment, anything which bore in the least degree upon the issues of life.

There is a beautiful passage in the Purgatorio of Dante about the dawn; he writes

> In that hour
> When near the dawn the swallow her sad song,
> Haply remembering ancient grief, renews;
> And when our minds, more wanderers from the flesh
> And less by thought restrained, are, as 't were, full
> Of holy divination in their dreams.

I suppose that it would be possible to interpret one's dreams symbolically; but in my own case, my dream experiences all seem to belong to a wholly different person from myself, a light-hearted, childish, careless creature, full of animation and inquisitiveness, buoyant and thoughtless, content to look neither forwards nor backwards, wholly without responsibility or intelligence, just borne along by the pleasure of the moment, perfectly harmless and friendly, as a rule, a sort of cheerful butterfly. That is not in the least my waking temperament; but it fills me sometimes with an uneasy suspicion that it is more like myself than I know.

THE VISITANT

X

THE VISITANT

I AM going to try to put into words a very singular and very elusive experience which visits me not infrequently. I cannot say when it began, but I first became aware of it about four years ago.

It takes the form of an instantaneous mental vision, not very distinct but still not to be mistaken for anything else, of two people, a husband and wife, who are living somewhere in a large newly built house. The husband is a man of, I suppose, about forty, the wife is a trifle younger, and they are childless. The husband is an active, well-built man with light, almost golden hair, rather coarse in texture, and with a pointed beard of the same hue. He has fine, clean-cut, muscular hands, and he wears, as I see him, a rough, rather shabby suit of light, homespun cloth. The wife is of fair complexion, a beautiful woman, with

brown hair, and dressed, I think, in a very simple and rather peculiar dress. They are people of high principle, wealthy, and with cultivated tastes. They care for music and books and art. The husband has no profession. They live in a wide, well-wooded landscape, I am inclined to think in Sussex, in a newly built house, as I have said, of white plaster and timber, tiled, with many gables and with two large, bow-windowed rooms, rather low, the big mullioned oriels of which, with leaded roofs, are a rather conspicuous feature of the house. The house stands on a slightly rising ground, in a park-like demesne of a few acres, well timbered, and with open paddocks of grass. The house is approached by a drive from the main road, with two big gateposts of brick, and a white gate between. To the right of the house among the trees is the louver of a stable. There is a terrace just in front of the house, full of flowers, with a low brick wall in front of it separating it from the field. I see the house and its surroundings more clearly than I see the figures themselves.

I cannot see the interior of the house at all clearly, with the exception of one room. I do not know where the front door is, nor have I ever seen

any of the upper rooms. The one exception is a big room on the right of the house as one looks at it from the main road. This room I see with great distinctness. It is large and low, papered with a white paper and with a parquetry floor, designed for a music room. There is a grand piano, but what I see most clearly are a good many books, rather inconveniently placed in low white bookcases which run round most of the room, under the windows, with three shelves in each. It seems to me to be a bad arrangement, because it would be necessary to stoop down so much for the books, but I do not think that there is much reading done in the room. There are several low armchairs draped in a highly colored chintz with a white ground; there are pictures on the walls but I cannot see them distinctly. I think they are water colors. The curtains are of a very peculiar and bright blue. A low window-seat runs round the oriel, with cushions of the same blue. It is in this room only that I see the two people, always together; and I have never seen any one else in the house. They are seen in certain definite positions, oftenest standing together looking out of the window, which must face the west, because

I see the sunset out of it. As a rule, the woman's hand is passed through the man's arm.

The vision simply flashes across my mind like a picture, whatever I am doing at the time. Sometimes I see it several times in a week, sometimes not for weeks together. I should recognize the house in a moment if I saw it; I do not think I should recognize the people. I cannot see the shapes of their features or their expressions, but I can see the bloom on the wife's cheek and its pure outline.

To the best of my knowledge I have never seen either the people or the house in real life; and yet I have strongly the sense that it is a real house and that the people are real. It does not seem to me like a mere imagination, because it comes too distinctly and too accurately for that. Nor does it seem to me to be a mere combination of things which I have seen. The curious part of it is that some parts of the vision are absolutely clear — thus I can see the very texture of the smooth plaster of the house, and the oak beams inset; and I can also see the fabric of the man's clothes and the color of his hair; but, however much I interrogate my memory or my fancy about other details,

they are all involved in a sort of mist which I cannot pierce. It is this which convinces me of the reality of the house, and makes me believe that it is not imagination; because, if it were, I think I should have enlarged my vision of the whole; but this I cannot do. There is a door, for instance, in the music-room, which is sometimes open, but even so I cannot see anything outside in the hall or passage to which it leads. Moreover, though I can recollect the visions with absolute distinctness, I cannot evoke them. I may be reading or writing, and I suddenly see in my mind the house across the meadows; or I am in the music-room, and the two figures are standing together in the window.

So strongly do I feel the actuality of it all, that if this book should fall into the hands of the people to whom the vision refers, I will ask them to communicate with me. I have no idea what their past has been, but I know their characters well. The fact that they have no children is a sorrow to them, but has served to center their affections strongly on each other. The husband is a very tranquil and unaffected man. There is no sort of pose about his life. He just lives as he likes best. He is unambitious, and he has no sense of

a duty owed to others. But this is not coupled with any sense of contempt or aloofness — he is invariably kind and gentle. He is an intellectual man, highly trained and clear-minded. The wife has less knowledge of the technique of artistic things, but a very fine, natural, critical taste. She cares, however, less for the things themselves than because her husband cares for them; but I do not think that she knows this. They have always enjoyed good health, and I cannot discern that they have had troubles of any kind. And I have the strongest sense of a perfectly natural high-mindedness about both, a healthy instinct for what is right and fine. They are absolutely without meanness; and they are entirely free from any sort of morbidity or dreariness. They have traveled a good deal, but they now seldom leave home; they designed and built their own house. One curious thing is that I have never heard music in the house, nor have I ever seen them reading, and yet I feel that they are much occupied with music and books.

What is the possible explanation of this curious vision? I have sometimes wondered if they have been brought into some unconscious rapport with me through one of my books. It seems to me just

possible that when I have seen them standing together there may be some phrase in one of my books which has struck them and which they are accustomed to remember; and I think it may be some phrase about the sunset, because it is at sunset that I generally see them. But this does not explain my vision of the house, because I have never seen either of them outside of the house, and I have several times seen the music-room with no one in it; how does the vision of the house, which is so strangely distinct, come to me?

They inspire me with a great feeling of respect and friendship; the vision is very beautiful, and is always attended by a great sense of pleasure. I feel that it does me good in some obscure way to be brought into touch with them. Yet I can never retain my hold on the scene for more than an instant; it is just there and then it is gone.

It is a very strange thing to be conscious of two quite distinct personalities, and yet without any power of winding myself any further into their thoughts. There seems to be no vital contact. I am admitted, as it were, at certain times to a sight of the place, but I am sure that there is no sort of volition on their part about it; I do not

feel that their thoughts are ever bent actually upon me, as I exist, but perhaps upon something connected with me.

I must add that, though I am a great dreamer at night and have always at all times a strong power of mental visualizations, I am not accustomed to be controlled by it, but rather to control it; and I have never at any time had any sort of similar vision, of a thing apart from memory or fancy.

I do believe very firmly in the telepathic faculty. I think that our thoughts are much affected both consciously and unconsciously by the thoughts of others. I believe thought takes place in a spiritual medium and that there is much interlacing and transference of thought. I have never tried any definite experiments in it, but I have had frequent evidence of my thoughts being affected by the thoughts of my friends. It seems to me that this may be a case of some open channel of communication, as if two wires had become in some way entangled. The whole method of thought is so obscure that it is hard to say under what conditions this takes place. But I allow myself the happiness of believing that the place and the peo-

ple of whom I have been so often aware are real and tangible existences, and that impressions of things unseen and unrecognized by me have passed into my brain, so that some secret fellowship has been established. It would be a great joy to me if this could be definitely established; and I am not without hopes that this piece of writing may by some happy chance be the bearer of definite tidings to two people whom unseen I love, and whose thought may have been bent aimlessly perhaps and indistinctly upon mine, but never without some touch of kinship and good will.

THAT OTHER ONE

XI

THAT OTHER ONE

I AM going to try, in these few pages, to draw water out of a deep well — the well of which William Morris wrote as the "Well at the World's End." I shall try to describe a very strange and secret experience, which visits me rarely and at unequal intervals; sometimes for weeks together not at all, sometimes several times in a day. When it happens it is not strange at all, nor wonderful; the only wonder about it is that it does not happen more often, because it seems at the moment to be the one true thing in a world of vain shadows; everything else falls away, becomes accidental and remote, like the lights, let me say, of some unknown town, which one sees as one travels by night and as one twitches aside the curtain from the window of a railway-carriage, in a sudden interval between two profound slumbers. The train has relaxed its speed; one looks out; the red and green signal

lamps hang high in the air; and one glides past a sleeping town, the lamps burning quietly in deserted streets; there are house-fronts below, in a long thoroughfare suddenly visible from end to end; above, there are indeterminate shadows, the glimmering faces of high towers; it is all ghost-like and mysterious; one only knows that men live and work there; and then the tides of slumber flow in upon the brain, and one dives thirstily to the depths of sleep.

Before I say more about it, I will just relate my last taste of the mood. I was walking alone in the autumn landscape; bare fields about me; the trees of a village to my right touched sharply with gold and russet red; some white-gabled cottages clustered together, and there was a tower among the trees; it was near sunset, and the sun seemed dragging behind him to the west long wisps of purple and rusty clouds touched with fire; below me to the left a stream passing slowly among rushes and willow-beds, all beautiful and silent and remote. I had an anxious matter in my mind, a thing that required, so it seemed to me, careful deliberation to steer a right course among many motives and contingencies. I had gone out alone to think it over.

I weighed this against that, and it seemed to me that I was headed off by some obstacle whichever way I turned. Whatever I desired to do appeared to be disadvantageous and even hurtful. "Yes," I said to myself, "this is one of those cases where whatever I do, I shall wish I had done differently! I see no way out." It was then that a deeper voice still seemed to speak in me, the voice of something strong and quiet and even indolent, which seemed half-amused, half-vexed, by my perturbation. It said, "When you have done reasoning and pondering, I will decide." Then I thought that a sort of vague, half-spoken, half-dumb dialogue followed.

"What are you?" I said. "What right have you to interfere?"

The other voice did not trouble to answer; it only seemed to laugh a lazy laugh.

"I am trying to think this all out," I said, half-ashamed, half-vexed. "You may help me if you will; I am perplexed — I see no way out of it!"

"Oh, you may think as much as you like," said the other voice. "I am in no hurry, I can wait."

"But I *am* in a hurry," I said, "and I cannot wait. This has got to be settled somehow, and without delay."

"I shall decide when the time comes," said the voice to me.

"Yes, but you do not understand," I said, feeling partly irritated and partly helpless. "There is this and that, there is so-and-so to be considered, there is the effect on these other persons to be weighed; there is my own position too — I must think of my health — there are a dozen things to be taken into account."

"I know," said the voice; "I do not mind your balancing all these things if you wish. I shall take no heed of that! I repeat that, when you have finished thinking it out, I shall decide."

"Then you know what you mean to do?" said I, a little angered.

"No, I do not know just yet," said the voice; "but I shall know when the time comes; there will be no doubt at all."

"Then I suppose I shall have to do what you decide?" I said, angry but impressed.

"Yes, you will do what I decide," said the voice; "you know that perfectly well."

"Then what is the use of my taking all this trouble?" I said.

"Oh, you may just as well look into it," said the

voice; "that is your part! You are only my servant, after all. You have got to work the figures and the details out, and then I shall settle. Of course you must do your part — it is not all wasted. What is wasted is your fretting and fussing!"

"I am anxious," I said. "I cannot help being anxious!"

"That is a pity!" said the voice. "It hurts you and it hurts me too, in a way. You disturb me, you know; but I cannot interfere with you; I must wait."

"But are you sure you will do right?" I said.

"I shall do what must be done," said the voice. "If you mean, shall I regret my choice, that is possible; at least you may regret it. But it will not have been a mistake."

I was puzzled at this, and for a time the voice was silent, so that I had leisure to look about me. I had walked some way while the dialogue went on, and I was now by the stream, which ran full and cold into a pool beside the bridge, a pool like a clouded jewel. How beautiful it was! . . . The old thoughts began again, the old perplexities. "If he says *that*," I said to myself, thinking of an

opponent of my plan, "then I must be prepared with an answer — it is a weak point in my case; perhaps it would be better to write; one says what one thinks; not what one means to say. . . ."

"Still at work?" said the voice. "You are having a very uncomfortable time over there. I am sorry for that! Yet I cannot think why you do not understand!"

"What *are* you?" I said impatiently.

There was no answer to that.

"You seem very strong and patient!" I said at last. "I think I rather like you, and I am sure that I trust you; but you irritate me, and you will not explain. Cannot you help me a little? You seem to me to be out of sight — the other side of a wall. Cannot you break it down or look over?"

"You would not like that," said the voice; "it would be inconvenient, even painful; it would upset your plans very much. Tell me — you like life, do you not?"

"Yes," I said, "I like life — at least I am very much interested in it. I do not feel sure if I like it; I think you know that better than I do. Tell me, do I like it?"

"Yes," said the voice; "at least I do. You have guessed right for once; it matters more what I like than what you like. You see, I believe in God, for one thing."

"So do I," I said eagerly. "I have reached that point! I am sure He is there. It is largely a question of argument, and I have really no doubt, no doubt at all. There are difficulties of course — difficulties about personality and intention; and then there is the origin of evil — I have thought much about that, and I have arrived at a solution; it is this. I can explain it best by an analogy. . . ."

There came a laugh from the other side of the wall, not a scornful laugh or an idle laugh, but a laugh kind and compassionate, like a father with a child on his knee; and the voice said, "I have seen Him — I see Him! He is here all about us, and He is yonder. He is not coming to meet us, as you think. . . . Dear me, how young you must be. . . . I had forgotten."

This struck me dumb for an instant; then I said, "You frighten me! Who are you, what are you, . . . *where* are you?"

And then the voice said, in a tone of the deepest

and sweetest love, as if surprised and a little pained, "My child!"

And then I heard it no more; and I went back to my cares and anxieties. But it was as the voice had said, and when the time came to decide, I had no doubt at all what to do.

Now I have told all this in the nearest and simplest words that I can find. I have had to use similitudes of voices and laughter and partition-walls, because one can only use the language which one knows. But it is all quite true and real, more real than a hundred talks which one holds with men and women whose face and dress one sees in rooms and streets, and with whom one bandies words about things for which one does not care. There was indeed some one present with me, whom I knew perfectly well though I could not discern him, whom I had known all my life, who had gone about with me and shared all my experiences, in so far as he chose. But before I go on to speak farther, I will tell one more experience, which came at a time when I was very unhappy, longing to escape from life, looking forward mournfully to death.

It had been under similar circumstances — a dreadful argument proceeding in my mind as to

what I could do to get back to happiness again, whom to consult, where to go, whether to give up my work, whether to add to it, what diet to use, how to get sleep which would not visit me.

"Can't you help me?" I said over and over again to the other person. At last the answer came, very faint and far away.

"I am sick," said the voice, "and I cannot come forth!"

That frightened me exceedingly, because I felt alone and weak. So I said, "Is it my fault? Is it anything that I have done?"

"I have had a blow," said the other voice. "You dealt it me — but it is not your fault — you did not know."

"What can I do?" I said.

"Ah, nothing," said the voice. "You must not disturb me! I am trying to recover, and I shall recover. Go on with your play, if you can, and do not heed me."

"My play!" I said scornfully. "Do you not know I am miserable?"

The voice gave a sigh. "You hurt me," it said. "I am weak and faint; but you can help me; be as brave as you can. Try not to think or grieve. I

shall be able to help you again soon, but not now. . . . Ah, leave me to myself," it added. "I must sleep, a long sleep; it is your turn to help!"

And then I heard no more; till a day long after, when the voice came to me on a bright morning by the sea, with the clear waves breaking and hissing on the shingle; the voice came blithe and strong, "I am well again; you have done your part, dear one! Give me your burden, and I will carry it; it is your time of joy!"

And then for a long time after that I did not hear the voice, and I was full of delight, hour by hour, grudging even the time I must spend in sleep, because it kept me from the life I loved.

These then are some of the talks we have held together, that Other One and I. But I must say this, that he will not always come for being called. I sometimes call to him and get no answer; sometimes he cries out beside me suddenly in the air. He seems to have a life of his own, quite distinct from mine. Sometimes when I am fretted and vexed, he is quietly joyful and elate, and then my troubles die away, like the footsteps of the wind upon water; and sometimes when I would be happy and contented, he is heavy and displeased, and takes

no heed of me; and then I too fall into sorrow and gloom. He is much the stronger, and it matters far more to me what he feels than what I feel. I do not know how he is occupied — very little, I think, and what is strangest of all, he changes somewhat; very slowly and imperceptibly; but he has changed more than I have in the course of my life. I do not change at all, I think. I can say better what I think, I am more accomplished and skilful; but the thought and motive is unaltered from what it was when I was a child. But he is different in some ways. I have only gone on perceiving and remembering, and sometimes forgetting. But he does not forget; and here I feel that I have helped him a little, as a servant can help his master to remember the little things he has to do.

I think that many people must have similar experiences to this. Tennyson had, when he wrote "The Two Voices," and I have seen hints of the same thing in a dozen books. The strange thing is that it does not help one more to be strong and brave, because I know this, if I know anything, that when the anxious and careful part of me lies down at last to rest, I shall slip past the wall which now divides us, and be clasped close in the arms of

that Other One; nay, it will be more than that! I shall be merged with him, as the quivering water-drop is merged with the fountain; that will be a blessed peace; and I shall know, I think, without any questioning or wondering, many things that are obscure to me now, under these low-hung skies, which after all I love so well. . . .

SCHOOLDAYS

XII

SCHOOLDAYS

1

IT certainly seems, looking back to the early years, that I have altered very little — hardly at all in fact! The little thing, whatever it is, that sits at the heart of the machine, the speck of soul-stuff that is really *me*, is very much the same creature, neither old nor young; confident, imperturbable, with a strange insouciance of its own, knowing what it has to do. I have done many things, gathered many impressions, ransacked experience, enjoyed, suffered; but whatever I have argued, expressed, tried to believe, aimed at, hoped, feared, has hardly affected that central core of life at all. And I feel as though that strange, dumb, cheerful self — it is always cheerful, I think — had played the part all along of a silent and not very critical spectator of all I have tried to be. The mind, the

reason, the emotion, have each of them expanded, acquired knowledge, learned skill, but that innermost cell has lain there, sleepless, perceptive, dreaming head on hand, watching, seldom making a sign of either approval or disapproval.

In childhood it was more dominant than it is now, perhaps. It went its way more securely, because, in my case at least, the mind was, in those far-off days, strangely inactive. The whole nature was bent upon observation. Ruskin is the only writer who has described what was precisely my own experience, when he says that as a child he lived almost entirely in the region of *sight*. It was the only part of me, the eye, that was then furiously and untiringly awake. Taste, smell, touch, had each of them at moments a sharp consciousness; but it was the shape, the form, the appearance of things, that interested me, took up most of my time and energy, occupied me unceasingly. Even now my memory ranges, with lively precision, over the home, the garden, the heathery moorland, the firwoods, the neighboring houses of the scene where I lived. I can see the winding walks, the larch shrubberies, the flower-borders, the very grain of the brickwork; while in the house itself, the wall

papers, the furniture, the patterns of carpets and chintzes, are all absolutely clear to the memory.

Thus I lived, from day to day and from year to year, in the moment as it passed; but I remember no touch of speculation or curiosity as to how or why things existed as they did. The house, the arrangements, the servants, the meal-times, the occupations were all simply accepted as they were, just the will of my parents taking shape. I never thought of interrogating or altering anything. Life came to me just so. I remember no sharp emotions, no dominant affections. My parents seemed to me kind and powerful; but it did not occur to me that, if I had died, they would feel any particular grief. I was just a part of their arrangements; and my idea of life was simply to manage so that I should be as little interfered with as possible, and go my way, annexing such little property as I could, and learning the appearance of the things that were too large to be annexed.

Then my elder brother went off to school. I do not remember being sorry, or missing his company; in fact I rather welcomed the additional independence it gave me. I was glad in a mild way when he came back for the holidays; but I do

not recollect the faintest curiosity about what he did at school, or what it was all like. He told us some stories about boys and masters; but it was all quite remote, like a fairy-tale; and then the time gradually drew near when I too was to go to school; but I remember neither interest or curiosity or excitement or anxiety. I think I rather enjoyed a few extra presents, and the packing of my school-box with a consciousness of proprietorship. And then the day came, and I drifted off like thistledown into the big world.

2

My father and mother took us down to school. It was a fine place at Mortlake, called Temple Grove, near Richmond Park. Mortlake was hardly more than an old-fashioned village then, in the country, not joined to London as it is now by streets and rows of villas. It was a place of big suburban mansions, with high walls everywhere, cedars looking over, towering chestnuts, big classical gateposts. Temple Grove, so called from the statesman, the patron of Swift, was a large, solid, handsome house with fine rooms, and large grounds, well timbered. Schoolrooms and dormitories had

been tacked on to the house, but all built in a solid, spacious way. It was dignified, but bare and austere. We arrived, and went in to see the headmaster, Mr. Waterfield, a tall, handsome, extremely impressive man, with curled hair and beard and flashing eyes. He was a fine gentleman, a brilliant talker, and an excellent teacher, though unnecessarily severe. I had been used to see my father, who was then himself headmaster of Wellington College, treated with obvious deference; but Waterfield, who was an old family friend, met him with a dignified sort of equality. My parents went in to luncheon with the family. My brother and I crawled off to the school dinner; he of course had many friends, and I was plunged, shy and bewildered, into the middle of them. There were over a hundred boys there. Some of them seemed to me alarmingly old and strong; but my brother's friends were kind to me, and I remember thinking at first that it was going to be a very pleasant sort of place. Then in the early afternoon my parents went off; we went to the station with them, and I said good-by without any particular emotion. It seemed to me a nice easy kind of life. But as my brother and I walked away, between the high-

walled gardens, back to the school, the first shadow fell. He was strangely silent and dull, I thought; and then he turned to me, and in an accent of tragedy which I had never heard him use before, he said, "Thirteen weeks at this beastly place!"

I took a high place for my age, and after due examination in the big schoolroom, where four masters were teaching at estrades, with little rows of lockered desks much hacked and carved, arranged symmetrically round each, the big fireplace guarded with high iron bars, I was led across the room, and committed to the care of a little, pompous, stout man, with big side-whiskers, a reddish nose, and an air half irritable, half good-natured, in a short gown, who was holding forth to a class. It was all complete: I had my place and my duty before me; and then gradually day by day the life shaped itself. I had a little cubicle in a high dormitory. There was the big, rather frowsy dining-room, where we took our meals; a large comfortable library where we could sit and read; outside there were two or three cricket fields, a graveled yard for drill, a gymnasium; and beyond that stretched what were called "the grounds," which seemed to me then and still seem a really

beautiful place. It had all been elaborately laid out; there was a big lawn, low-lying, where there had once been a lake, shrubberies and winding walks, a ruinous building, with a classical portico, on the top of a wooded mound, a kitchen garden and paddocks for cows beyond; and on each side the walls and palings of other big mansions, all rather grand and mysterious. And there within that little space my life was to be spent.

The only sight we ever had of the outer world was that we went on Sundays to an extraordinarily ugly and tasteless modern church, where the services were hideously performed; and occasionally we were allowed to go over to Richmond with a shilling or two of pocket-money to shop; and sometimes there were walks, a dozen boys with a good-natured master rambling about Richmond Park, with its forest clumps and its wandering herds of deer, all very dim and beautiful to me.

Very soon I settled in my own mind that it was a detestable place. Yet I was never bullied or molested in any way. The tone of the place was incredibly good; not one word or hint of moral evil did I ever hear there during the whole two years I

spent there, so that I left the school as innocent as I had entered it.

But it was a place of terrors and solitude. There were rules which one did not know, and might unawares break. I did not, I believe, make a single real friend there. I liked a few of the boys, but was wholly bent on guarding my inner life from every one. The work was always easy to me, the masters were good-natured and efficient. But I lived entirely in dreams of the holidays — home had become a distant heavenly place; and I recollect waking early in the summer mornings, hearing the scream of peacocks in a neighboring pleasaunce, and thinking with a sickening disgust of the strict, ordered routine of the place, no one to care about, dull work to be done, nothing to enjoy or to be interested in. There were games, but they were not much organized, and I seldom played them. I wandered about in free times in the grounds, and the only times of delight that I recollect were when one buried oneself in a book in the library, and dived into imaginations.

The place was well managed; we were wholesomely fed; but there had grown up a strange kind of taboo about many of the things we were sup-

posed to eat. I had a healthy appetite, but the tradition was that all the food was unutterably bad, adulterated, hocussed. The theory was that one must just eat enough to sustain life. There was, for instance, an excellent tapioca pudding served on certain days; but no one was allowed to eat it. The law was that it had to be shoveled into envelopes and afterwards cast away in the playground. I do not know if the masters saw this — it was never adverted upon — and I did it ruefully enough. The consequence was that one lived hungrily in the midst of plenty, and food became the one prepossession of life.

I was a delicate boy in those days, and used often to be sent off to the sanatorium with bad throats and other ailments. It was a little, old-fashioned house in Mortlake, and the matron of it had been an old servant of our own. She was the only person there whom I regarded with real affection, and to go to the sanatorium was like heaven. One had a comfortable room, and dear Louisa used to embrace and kiss me stealthily, provide little treats for me, take me out walks. I have spent many hours happily in the little walled garden there, with its big box trees, or gazing from a window into the

street, watching the grocer over the way set out his shop-window.

Of incidents, tragic or comic, I remember but few. I saw a stupid boy vigorously caned with a sickening extremity of horror. I recollect a "school licking" being given to an ill-conditioned boy for a nasty piece of bullying. The boys ranged themselves down the big schoolroom, and the culprit had to run the gauntlet. I can see his ugly, tear-stained face coming slowly along among a shower of blows. I joined in with a will, I remember, though I hardly knew what he had done. I remember a few afternoons spent at the houses of friendly masters; but otherwise it was all a drab starved sort of level, a life lived by a rule, with no friendships, no adventures; I marked off the days before the holidays on a little calendar, simply bent on hiding what I was or thought or felt from every one, with a fortitude that was not in the least stoical. What I was afraid of I hardly know; my aim was to be absolutely inoffensive and ordinary, to do what every one else did, to avoid any sort of notice. I was a strange mixture of indifference and sensitiveness. I did not in the least care how I was regarded, I had no ambitions of any

kind, did not want to be liked, or to succeed, or to make an impression; while I was very sensitive to the slightest comment or ridicule. It seems strange to me now that I should have hated the life with such an intensity of repugnance, for no harm or ill-usage ever befell me; but if that was life, well, I did not like it! I trusted no one; I neither wanted nor gave confidences. The term was just a dreary interlude in home life, to be lived through with such indifference as one could muster.

I spent two years there; and remember my final departure with my brother. I never wanted to see or hear of any one there again — masters, servants, or boys. It was a case of good-by forever and thank God! And I remember with what savage glee and delicious anticipation I saw the last of the high-walled house, with its roofs and wings, its great gateposts and splendid cedars. I could laugh at its dim terrors on regaining my freedom; but I had not the least spark of gratitude or loyalty; such kindnesses as I received I had taken dumbly, never thinking that they arose out of any affection or interest, but treating them as the unaccountable choice of my elders; — we stopped for an instant at the little sanatorium — that had

been a happy place at least — and I was tearfully hugged to Louisa's ample bosom, Louisa alone being a little sorry that I should be so glad to get away.

I do not think that the life there, sensible, healthy, and well-ordered as it was, did me much good. I was a happy enough boy in home life, but had little animal spirits, and none of the boisterous, rough-and-tumble ebullience of boyhood. I was shy and sensitive; but I doubt if it was well that interest, enjoyment, emotion, should all have been so utterly starved as they were. It made me suspicious of life, and incurious about it; I did not like its loud sounds, its combative merriment, its coarse flavors; the real life, that of observation, imagination, dreams, fancies, had been hunted into a corner; and the sense that one might incur ridicule, enmity, severity, dislike, harshness, had filled the air with uneasy terrors. I came away selfish, able — I had won a scholarship at Eton with entire ease — innocent, childish, bewildered, wholly unambitious. The world seemed to me a big, noisy, stupid place, in which there was no place for me. The little inner sense of which I have spoken was hardly awake; it had had its first sight of human-

ity, and it disliked it; it was still solitary and silent, finding its own way, and quite unaware that it need have any relation with other human beings.

3

Then came Eton. Into which big place I drifted again in a state of mild bewilderment. But big as Eton is — it was close on a thousand boys, when I went there — at no time was I in the least degree conscious of its size as an uncomfortable element. The truth is that Eton runs itself on lines far more like a university than a school: each house is like a college, with its own traditions and its own authority. There is very little intercourse between the younger boys at different houses, and there is an instinctive disapproval among the boys themselves of external relations. The younger boys of a house play together, to a large extent work together, and live a common life. It is tacitly understood that a boy throws in his lot with his own house, and if he makes many friends outside he is generally unpopular, on the ground that he is thought to find his natural companions not good enough for him. Neither have boys of differ-

ent ages much to do with each other; each house is divided by parallel lines of cleavage, so that it is not a weltering mass of boyhood, but a collection of very clearly defined groups and circles.

Moreover, in my own time there was no building at Eton which could hold the whole school, so that on no occasion did I ever see the school assembled. There were two chapels, the schoolrooms were considerably scattered; even on the occasions when the headmaster made a speech to the school, he did not even invite the lower boys to attend, while there was no compulsion on the upper boys to be present, so that it was not necessary to go, unless one thought it likely to be amusing.

I was myself on the foundation, one of the seventy king's scholars, as we were called; we lived in the old buildings; we dined together in the college hall, a stately Gothic place, over four centuries old, with a timbered roof, open fireplaces, and portraits of notable Etonians. We wore cloth gowns in public, and surplices in the chapel. It was all very grand and dignified, but we were in those days badly fed, and very little looked after. There were many ancient and curious customs, which one picked up naturally, and never thought

them either old or curious. For instance, when I first went there, the small boys, three at a time, waited on the sixth form at their dinner, being called servitors, handing plates, pouring out beer, or holding back the long sleeves of the big boys' gowns, as they carved for themselves at the end of the table. This was abolished shortly after my arrival as being degrading. But it never occurred to us that it was anything but amusing; we had the fun of watching the great men at their meal, and hearing them gossip. I remember well being kindly but firmly told by the present Dean of Westminster, then in sixth form, that I must make my appearance for the future with cleaner hands and better brushed hair!

We were kindly and paternally treated by the older boys; I was assigned as a fag to my present publisher, Mr. Reginald Smith. I had to fill and empty his bath for him, make his tea and toast, call him in the morning, and run errands. In return for which I was allowed to do my work peacefully in his room, in the evenings, when the fags' quarters were noisy, and if I had difficulties about my work, he was always ready to help me. So normal a thing was it, that I remember saying in-

dignantly to my tutor, when he marked a false quantity in one of my verses, "Why, sir, my fagmaster did that!" He laughed and said, "Take my compliments to your fagmaster, and tell him that the first syllable of *senator* is short!"

We lived as lower boys in a big room with cubicles, which abutted on the passage where the sixth form rooms were. It was a noisy place, with its great open fireplace and huge oak table. If the noise was excessive, the Sixth Form intervened; and I remember being very gently caned, in the company of the present Dean of St. Paul's, for making a small bonfire of old blotting-paper, which filled the place with smoke.

The liberty, after the private school, was astonishing. We had to appear in school at certain hours, not very numerous; and some extra work was done with the private tutor; but there was no supervision, and we were supposed to prepare our work and do our exercises, when and as we could. There were a few compulsory games, but otherwise we were allowed to do exactly as we liked. The side streets of Windsor were out of bounds, but we were allowed to go up the High Street, we had free access to the castle and park and all the

surrounding country. On half holidays — three a week — our names were called over; but it left one with a three-hour space in the afternoon, when we could go exactly where we would. The saints' days and certain anniversaries were whole holidays, and we were free from morning to night. Then there was a delightful room, the old school library, now destroyed, where we could go and read; and many an hour did I spend there looking vaguely into endless books. I well remember seeing the present Lord Curzon and one of the Wallops standing by the fireplace there, and discussing some political question, and how amazed I was at the profundity of their knowledge and the dignity of their language.

But in many ways it was a very isolated life; for a long time I hardly knew any boys except just the dozen or so who entered the place with me. I knew no boys at other houses, except a few in my school division, and never did more than exchange a few words with them. One never thought of speaking to a casual boy, unless one knew him; and there are many men whom I have since known well who were in the school with me, and with whom I never exchanged a syllable.

Though there was a master in college, who read evening prayers, gave leaves and allowances, and was consulted on matters of business, he had practically nothing to do with the discipline. That was all in the hands of the sixth form, who kept order, put up notices, and were allowed not only to cane but to set lines. No one ever thought of appealing to the master against them, and their powers were never abused. But there was very little overt discipline anywhere. The masters could not inflict corporal punishment. They could set punishments, and for misbehavior, or continued idleness, they could send a boy to the headmaster to be flogged. But the discipline of the place was instinctive, and public opinion was infinitely strong. One found out by the light of nature what one might do and what one might not, and the dread of being in any way unusual or eccentric was very potent. There were two or three very ill-governed houses, where things went very wrong indeed behind the scenes; but as far as public order went, it was perfect. The boys managed their own games and their own affairs; a strong sense of subordination penetrated the whole place, and the old Eton aphorism, that a boy

learned to know his place and to keep it, held good without any sense of coercion or constraint.

I do not think that the educational system was a good one. In my days there was little taught besides classics and mathematics and divinity. There was a little French and science and history; but the core of the whole thing was undiluted classics. We did a good deal of composition, Greek and Latin, and the Latin verses were exercises out of which I got much real enjoyment, and some of the pride of authorship. But it was possible to be very idle, and to get much contraband help in work from other boys. Most of the school work consisted of repetition, and of classical books, dully and leisurely construed. I do not think I ever attempted to attend to the work in school; and there were few stimulating teachers. I needed strict and careful teaching, and got some from my private tutor; but otherwise there was no individual attention. The net result was that a few able boys turned out very good scholars, saturated with classics; but a large number of boys were really not educated at all. The forms were too large for real supervision; and as long as one produced adequate exercises, and sate quiet in one's

corner, one was left genially alone. It was not fashionable to "sap," as it was called; and though a few ambitious boys worked hard, we most of us lived in a happy-go-lucky way, just doing enough to pass muster. I took not the faintest interest in my work for a long time; but I read a great many English books, wrote poetry in secret, picked up a vague acquaintance, of a very inaccurate kind, with Latin and Greek, but possessed no exact knowledge of any sort.

Gradually, as I rose in the school, a faint idea of social values shaped itself. Let me say frankly that we were wholly democratic. There were many wealthy boys, many with titles; but not the faintest interest was taken in either. I was surprised to find later on in my career at school, that boys whose names I had known by hearsay, were peers, though at first I had no idea what the peerage was. Whatever we were free from, we were at all events free from snobbishness. Athletics were what constituted our aristocracy, pure and simple. Boys in the eleven and the eight were the heroes of the place, and the school club called Pop, to which mainly athletes were elected, enjoyed an absolute supremacy, and indeed ran the out-of-doors disci-

pline of the school. In fact, on occasions like big matches, the boys were kept back behind the lines, by members of Pop parading with canes, and slashing at the crowd if they came past the boundaries. All the social standing of boys was settled entirely by athletics. A boy might be clever, agreeable, manly, a good game-shot or a rider to hounds in the holidays, but if he was no good at the prescribed games, he was nobody at all at Eton. It was wholesome in a sense; but a bad boy who was a good athlete might and did wield a very evil influence. Such boys were above criticism. The moral tone was not low so much as strangely indifferent. A boy's private life was his own affair, and public opinion exercised no particular moral sway. Yet vague and guileless as I myself was, I gratefully record that I never came in the way of any evil influence whatever at Eton, in any respect whatever. Talk was rather loose, and one believed evil of other boys easily enough. To express open disapproval would have been held to be priggish; and though undoubtedly the tone of certain houses and certain groups was far from good, there yet ran through the place a mature sense of a boy's right to be independent, and undesirable ways of

life were more a matter of choice than of coercion. It was, in fact, far more a mirror of the larger world than any other school I have ever heard of; and I know of no school story which gives any impression of a life so curiously free as it all was. There was none of that electrical circulation of the news of events and incident that is held to be characteristic of school life. One used to hear long after, or not at all, of things which had happened. There were rumors, there was gossip; but I cannot imagine any place where a boy of solitary or retiring character might be so entirely unaware of anything that was going on. It was a highly individualistic place; and if one conformed to superficial traditions, it was possible to lead, as I certainly did, a very quiet and secluded sort of life, reading, rambling about, talking endlessly and eagerly to a few chosen friends, quite unconscious that anything was being done for one, socially or educationally, entirely unmolested, as long as one was good-natured and easy-going.

It was therefore a good school for a boy with any toughness of mind or originality; but it tended in the case of normal and unreflective boys to develop a conventional type; good-mannered, sen-

sible, with plenty of *savoir faire*, but with a wrong set of values. It made boys overestimate athletics, despise intellectual things, worship social success. It gave them the wrong sort of tolerance, by which I mean the tolerance that excuses moral lapses, but that also thinks contemptuously of ideas and mental originality. The idols of the place were good-humored, modest, orderly athletes. The masters made friends with them, because a good mutual understanding conduced to discipline, and they were, moreover, pleasant and cheerful companions. But boys of character and force, unless they were also athletic, were apt to be overlooked. The theory of government was not to interfere, and there was an absence of enthusiasm and inspiration. The headmaster was Dr. Hornby, afterwards provost, a courteous, handsome, dignified gentleman, a fine preacher, and one of the most charming public speakers I have ever heard. We respected and admired him, but he knew little of his masters, and never made his personal influence, which might have been great, felt among the boys. He was a man of matchless modesty and refinement; he never fulminated or lectured; I never heard an irritable word fall from his lips; but on

the other hand he never appealed to us, or asked our help, or spoke eagerly or indignantly about any event or tendency. He hated evil, but closed his eyes to it, and preferred to think that it was not there. There were masters who in their own houses and forms displayed more vivid qualities; but the whole tone of the place was against anything emotional or passionate or uplifting; the ideal that soaked into the mind was one of temperate, orderly, well-mannered athleticism.

At the end of my time I rose to moderate distinction. I began to read the classics privately, I reached sixth form, and even was elected into Pop. But I was always unadventurous, and in a way timid. I nurtured a private life of my own on books and talk, and felt that the center of life had insensibly shifted from home to school. But in and through it all, I never gained any deep patriotism, any unselfish ambition, any visions which could have inspired me to play a noble part in the world. I am sure that was as much the result of my own temperament as of the spirit of the place; but the spirit of the place was potent, and taught me to acquiesce in an ideal of decorum, of subordination, of regular, courteous, unenthusiastic life.

Leaving the school was a melancholy business; one's roots were entwined very deep with the soil, the buildings, the memories, the happiness of the place — for happy above all things it was — in the last few weeks there were many strange emotional outbursts from boys who had seemed conventional enough; and there was a dreary sense that life was at an end, and would have little of future brightness or excitement to provide. I packed, I made my farewells, I distributed presents; and as I drove away, the carriage, ascending the bridge by the beloved playing-fields, with its lawns and elms, the gliding river and the Castle towering up behind, showed me in a glance the old red-brick walls, the turrets, the high chapel, with its pinnacles and great buttresses, where seven good years had been spent. I burst, I remember, into unashamed tears; but no sense of regret for failure, or idleness, or vacuous ease, or absence of all fine intention, came over me, though I had been guilty of all these things. I wish that I had felt remorse! But I was only grateful and fond and sad at leaving so untroubled and delightful a piece of life behind me. The world ahead did not seem to me to hold out anything which I burned to do or to achieve; it was

but the closing of a door, the end of a chapter, the sudden silencing of a music, sweet to hear, which could not come again. . . .

That was all five-and-thirty years ago! Since that time — I have seen it unmistakably, both as a schoolmaster and as a don — a different spirit has grown up, a sense of corporate and social duty, a larger idea of national service, not loudly advertised but deeply-rooted, and far removed from the undisciplined individualism of my boyhood. It has been a secret growth, not an educational program. The Boer War, I think, revealed its presence, and the war we are now waging has testified to its mature strength. It has come partly by organisation, and still more through the workings of a more generous and self-sacrificing ideal. In any case it is a great and noble harvest; and I rejoice with all my heart that it has thus ripened and borne fruit, in courage and disinterestedness, and high-hearted public spirit.

AUTHORSHIP

XIII

AUTHORSHIP

1

THE essay which stands next in this volume, "Herb Moly and Heartsease," was the subject of a curious and interesting experiment. It seemed to me, when I first thought of it, to be a suggestive subject, a substantial idea. One ought not to write a commentary on one's own work, but the underlying theme is this: I have been haunted all my life, at intervals, sometimes very insistently, by the sense of a quest; and I have often seemed to myself to be searching for something which I have somehow lost; to be engaged in trying to rediscover some emotion or thought which I had once certainly possessed and as certainly have forgotten or mislaid. At times I felt on the track of it, as if it had passed that way not long before; at times I have felt as if I were close upon it, and as if it were only hidden from me by the thinnest

of veils. I have reason to know that other people have the same feeling; and indeed it is that which constitutes the singular and moving charm of Newman's poem, "Lead, Kindly Light"; where all is summed up in those exquisite lines, often so strangely misinterpreted and misunderstood, which end the poem,

> And with the morn those angel faces smile,
> Which I have loved long since, and lost awhile.

I wish that he had not written "those angel faces," because it seems to limit the quest to ecclesiastical lines, as, indeed, I expect Newman did limit it. But we must not be so blind as to be unable to see behind the texture of prepossessions that decorate, as with a tapestry, the chambers of a man's inner thought; and I have no doubt whatever that Newman meant the same thing that I mean, though he used different symbols. Again we find the same idea in Wordsworth's "Ode on the Intimations of Immortality," the thought that life is not circumscribed by birth and death, but that one's experience is a much larger and older thing than the experience which mere memory records. It is that which one has lost; and one of

the greatest mysteries of art lies in the fact that a picture, or a sudden music, or a page in a book, will sometimes startle one into the consciousness of having heard, seen, known, felt the emotion before, elsewhere, beyond the visible horizon.

Well, I tried to put that idea into words in "Herb Moly and Heartsease"; and because it was a deep and dim idea, and also partly because it fascinated me greatly, I spent far more time and trouble on the little piece than I generally spend.

Then it occurred to me, in a whimsical moment, that I would try an experiment. I would send out the thing as a *ballon d'essai*, to see if any one would read it for itself, or would detect me underneath the disguise. Through the kind offices of a friend, I had it published secretly and anonymously. I chose the most beautiful type and paper I could find; it cost me far more than the sale of the whole edition could possibly recoup. I had it sent to papers for review, and I even had some copies sent to literary friends of my own.

The result was a quite enchanting humiliation. One paper reviewed it kindly, in a little paragraph, and said it was useful; another said that the writer

used the word "one" much too frequently; while only one of my friends even acknowledged it. It is pleasant to begin at the bottom again, and find that no one will listen, even to a very careful bit of writing by one who has at all events had a good deal of practice, and who did his very best!

2

This set me thinking over my literary adventures; and I think they may be interesting to other authors or would-be authors; and then I wish to go a little further, and try to say, if I can, what I believe the writing of books really to be, why one writes, and what one is aiming at. I have a very clear idea about it all, and it can do no harm to state it.

I was brought up much among books and talk about books. Indeed, I have always believed that my father, though he had great practical gifts of organization and administration, which came out in his work as a schoolmaster and a bishop, was very much of an artist at heart, and would have liked to be a poet. Indeed, the practice of authorship has run in my family to a quite extraordinary degree. In four generations, I believe that some

twenty of my blood-relations have written and published books, from my cousin Adelaide Anne Procter to my uncle Henry Sidgwick. When we were children, we produced little magazines of prose and poetry, and read them in the family circle. I wrote poetry as a boy at Eton, and at Cambridge as an undergraduate; and at the end of my time at Cambridge I produced a novel, which I sent to "Macmillan's Magazine," of which Lord Morley was then editor, who sent it back to me with a kind letter to say that it was sauce without meat, and that I should not be proud of the book in later life if it were published.

Then as an undergraduate I began an odd little book called "Memoirs of Arthur Hamilton," a morbid affair, which was published anonymously, and, though severely handled by reviewers, had a certain measure of success. But then I became a busy schoolmaster, and all I did was to write labored little essays, which appeared in various magazines, and were afterwards collected. Then I took up poetry and worked very hard at it indeed for some years, producing five volumes, which very few people ever read. It was a great delight, writing poetry, and I have masses of unpublished

poems. But I do not grudge the time spent on it, because I think it taught me the use of words. Then came two volumes of stories, mostly told or read to the boys in my house, with a medieval sort of flavor—"The Hill of Trouble" and "The Isles of Sunset."

I also put together a little book on *Tennyson* which has, I believe, the merit of containing all the most interesting anecdotes about him, and I also wrote the *Rossetti* in the Men of Letters Series, a painstaking book, rather rhetorical; though the truth about Rossetti cannot be told, even if it could be known.

All this work was done in the middle of hard professional work, with a boarding-house and many pupils. I will dare to say that I was an active and diligent schoolmaster, and writing was only a recreation. I could only get a few hours a week at it, and it never interfered with my main work.

My father died in 1896, and I wrote his life in two big volumes, a very solid piece of work; but it was after that, I think, that my real writing began. I believe it was in 1899 that I slowly composed "The House of Quiet," but I could not

satisfy myself about the ending, and it was laid aside.

Then I was offered the task of editing Queen Victoria's letters. I resigned my mastership with a mixture of sorrow and relief. The work was interesting and absorbing, but I did not like our system of education, nor did I believe in it. But I put my beliefs into a little book called "The Schoolmaster," which made its way.

I left my work as a teacher in 1903, when I was forty-one. "The House of Quiet" appeared in that year anonymously, and began to sell. I lived on at Eton with an old friend; went daily up to Windsor Castle and toiled through volumes of papers. But I found that it was not possible to work more than a few hours a day at the task of selection, because one's judgment got fatigued and blurred.

The sudden cessation of heavy professional work made itself felt in an extreme zest and lightness of spirit. It was a very happy and delightful time. I was living among friends, who were all very hard at work, and the very contrast of my freedom with their servitude was enlivening. I was able, too, to think over my schoolmastering

experience; and the result was "The Upton Letters," an inconsequent but I think lively book, also published anonymously and rather disregarded by reviewers. But the book was talked about and read; and for the next year or two I worked with indefatigable zest at writing. I brought out monographs on *Edward FitzGerald* and *Walter Pater;* I wrote "The Thread of Gold," which also succeeded; and in the next year I settled at Cambridge, and wrote "From a College Window" as a serial in the "Cornhill," and "The Gate of Death," both anonymously; and in the following year "Beside Still Waters" and "The Altar Fire." All this time the Queen's letters were going quietly on in the background.

I have written half-a-dozen books since then. But that is how I began my work; and the one point which is worth noticing is that the four books which have sold most widely, "The House of Quiet," "The Upton Letters," "The Thread of Gold," and the "College Window," were all of them issued anonymously, and the authorship was for a considerable time undetected. So that it is fair to conclude that the public is on the lookout for books which interest it and will find out what it wants;

because none of those books owed anything whatever to my parentage or my position or my friends — or indeed to the reviewers either; and it proves the truth of what a publisher said to me the other day, that neither reviews nor advertisements will really do much for a book; but that if readers begin to talk about a book and to recommend it, it is apt to go ahead. And, further, I conclude from the fact that none of my subsequent books have been as popular as these, though I have no cause to complain, that a new voice and new ideas are what prove attractive — and perhaps not so much new ideas as familiar ideas which have not been clearly expressed and put into words. There was a little mystery about the writer then, and there is no mystery now; every one knows exactly what to expect; and the new generation wants a fresh voice and a different way of putting things.

3

As to the motive force, whatever it may be, that lies behind writing, we may disengage from it all subsidiary motives, such as the desire for money, philanthropy, professional occupation; but the main force is, I think, threefold. The motive of

art pure and simple, the desire for communication with one's fellows, and the motive of ambition, which may almost be called the desire for applause.

The ultimate instinct of art is the expression of the sense of beauty. A scene, or a character, or an idea, or an emotion, strikes the mind as being salient, beautiful, strange, wonderful, and the mind desires to record it, to depict it, to isolate it, to emphasize it. The process becomes gradually, as the life of the world continues, more and more complex. It seemed enough at first just to record; but then there follows the desire to contrast, to heighten effects, to construct elaborate backgrounds; then the process grows still more refined, and it becomes essential to lay out materials in due proportion, and to clear away all that is otiose or confusing, so that the central idea, whatever it is, shall stand out in absolute clarity and distinctness. Gradually a great deal of art becomes traditional and conventional; certain forms stereotype themselves, and it becomes more and more difficult to invent a new form of any kind. When art is very much bound by tradition, it becomes what is called classical, and makes its appeal to a cultured circle; and then there is a revolutionary out-

burst of what is called a romantic type, which means on the one hand a weariness of the old traditions and longing for freedom, and on the other hand a corresponding desire, on the part of an extended and less cultured circle, for art of a more elastic kind. Literature has this cyclic ebb and flow; but what is romantic in one age tends to become classical in the next, as the new departure becomes in its turn traditional. These variations are no doubt the result of definite, psychological laws, at present little understood. The renaissance of a nation, when from some unascertained cause there is a fresh outburst of interest in ideas, is quite unaccounted for by logical or mathematical laws of development. The French Revolution and the corresponding romantic revival in England are instances of this. A writer like Rousseau does not germinate interest in social and emotional ideas, but merely puts into attractive form a number of ideas vaguely floating in numberless minds. A writer like Scott indicates a sudden repulsion in many minds against a classical tradition grown sterile, and a widespread desire to extract romantic emotions from a forgotten medieval life. Of course a romantic writer like Scott read into the

Middle Ages a number of emotions which were not historically there; and the romantic writer, generally speaking, tends to treat of life in its more sublime and glowing moments, and to amass brilliant experience and absorbing emotion in an unscientific way. Just now we are beginning to revolt against this over-emotionalized treatment of life, and realism is a deliberate attempt to present life as it is — not to improve upon it or to select it, but to give an impression of its complexity as well as of its bleakness. The romanticist typifies and stereotypes character, the realist recognizes the inconsistency and the changeableness of personality. The romanticist presents qualities and moods personified, the realist depicts the flux and variableness of mood, and the effects exerted by characters upon each other. But the motive is ultimately the same, only the romanticist is interested in the passion and inspiration of life, the realist more in the facts and actual stuff of life. But in both cases the motive is the same: to depict and to record a personal impression of what seems wonderful and strange.

The second motive in art is the desire to share and communicate experience. Every one must

know how intolerable to a perceptive person loneliness is apt to be, and how instinctive is the need of some companion with whom to participate in the beauty or impressiveness or absurdity of a scene. The enjoyment of experience is diminished or even obliterated if one has to taste it in solitude. Of course there are people so constituted as to be able to enjoy, let us say, a good dinner, or a concert of music, or a play, in solitude; but if such a person has the instinct of expression, he enjoys it all half-consciously as an amassing of material for artistic use; and it is almost inconceivable that an artist should exist who would be prepared to continue writing books or painting pictures or making statues, quite content to put them aside when completed, with no desire to submit them to the judgment of the world. My own experience is that the thought of sharing one's enjoyment with other people is not a very conscious feeling while one is actually engaged in writing. At the moment, the thought of expression is paramount, and the delight lies simply in depicting and recording. Yet the impulse to hand it all on is subconsciously there, to such an extent that if I knew that what I wrote could never pass under another human eye,

I have little doubt that I should very soon desist from writing altogether. The social and gregarious instinct is really very dominant in all art; and all writers who have a public at all must become aware of this fact, by the number of manuscripts which are submitted to them by would-be authors, who ask for advice and criticism and introductions to publishers. It would be quite easy for me, if I complied fully with all such requests, to spend the greater part of my time in the labor of commenting on these manuscripts. It is indeed the nearest that many amateurs can get to publication. As Ruskin, I think, once said, it is a curious irony of authorship that if a writer once makes a success the world does its best, by inundating him with every sort of request, to prevent his ever repeating it. I suppose that painters and sculptors do not suffer so much in this way, because it is not easy to send about canvases or statues by parcels post. But nothing is easier than to slip a manuscript into an envelope and to require an opinion from an author. I will confess that I very seldom refuse these requests. At the moment at which I write I have three printed novels and a printed book of travel, a poem, and two volumes of essays in manu-

script upon my table, and I shall make shift to say something in reply, though except for the satisfaction of the authors in question, I believe that my pains will be wholly thrown away, for the simple reason that it is a very lengthy business to teach any one how to write, and also partly because what these authors desire is not criticism but sympathy and admiration.

The third motive which underlies the practice of art is undoubtedly the sense of performance and the desire for applause. It is easy from a pose of dignity and high-mindedness to undervalue and overlook this. But it may safely be said that when a man challenges the attention of the public, he does not do it that he may give pleasure, but that he may receive praise. As Elihu the Buzite said with such exquisite frankness in the book of Job, "I will speak, that I may be refreshed!" The amateurs who send their work for inspection cannot as a rule bear to face this fact. They constantly say that they wish to do good, or to communicate enjoyment and pleasure. To be honest, I do not much believe that the motive of the artist is altruistic. He writes for his own enjoyment, perhaps, but he publishes that his skill and power

of presentment may be recognized and applauded. In FitzGerald's "Letters" there is a delightful story of a parrot who had one accomplishment — that of ruffling up his feathers and rolling his eyes so that he looked like an owl. When the other domestic pets were doing their tricks, the owner of the parrot, to prevent its feelings being hurt, used carefully to request it "to do its little owl." And the truth is that we most of us want to do our little owl. Stevenson said candidly that applause was the breath of life to an artist. Many, indeed, find the money they make by their work delightful as a symbol of applause in the sense of Shelley's fine dictum, "Fame is love disguised." It is not a wholly mean motive, because many of us are beset by an idea that the shortest way to be loved is to be admired. It is a great misapprehension, because admiration breeds jealousy quite as often as it breeds affection, indeed oftener! But from the child that plays its little piece, or the itinerant musician that blows a flat cornet in the street, to the great dramatist or musician, the same desire to produce a favorable impression holds good.

I once dined alone with a celebrated critic, who indicated, as we sat smoking in his study, a great

pile of typewritten sheets upon his table. "That is the next novel of So-and-so," he said, mentioning a well-known novelist; "he asks me for a candid criticism; but unfortunately the only language he now understands is the language of adulation!"

That is a true if melancholy fact, plainly stated; that to many an artist to be said to have done well is almost more important than to know that the thing has been well done. It is not a wholesome frame of mind, perhaps; but it cannot be overlooked or gainsaid.

Even the greatest of authors are susceptible to it. Robert Browning, who except for an occasional outburst of fury against his critics, was far more tolerant of and patient under misunderstanding than most poets, said in a moment of elated frankness, when he received an ovation from the students of a university, that he had been waiting for that all his life; Tennyson managed to combine a hatred of publicity with a thirst for fame. Wordsworth, as Carlyle pungently said, used to pay an annual visit to London in later life "to collect his little bits of tribute." And even though Keats could say that his own criticism of his own works had given him far more pain than the opin-

ions of any outside critics, yet the possibility of recognition and applause must inevitably continue to be one of the chief *raisons d'être* of art.

But the main motive of writing lies in the creative instinct, pure and simple; and the success of all literary art must depend upon the personality of the writer, his vitality and perception, his combination of exuberance and control. The reason why there are comparatively so few great writers is that authorship, to be wholly successful, needs so rich an outfit of gifts, creative thought, emotion, style, clearness, charm, emphasis, vocabulary, perseverance. Many writers have some of these gifts; and the essential difference of amateur writing from professional writing is that the amateur has, as a rule, little power of rejection and selection, or of producing a due proportion and an even surface; amateur poetry is characterized by good lines strung together by weak and patchy rigmaroles — like a block of unworked ore, in which the precious particles glitter confusedly; while the artistic poem is a piece of chased jewel-work. It is true that great poets have often written hurriedly and swiftly; but probably there is an intense selectiveness at work in the background all the time, pro-

duced by instinctive taste as well as by careful practice.

Amateur prose again has an unevenness of texture and arrangement, good ideas and salient thoughts floundering in a vapid and inferior substance; it is often not appreciated by amateurs how much depends on craftsmanship; I have known brilliant and accomplished conversationalists who have been persuaded, perhaps in mature life, to attempt a more definite piece of writing; when it is pathetic to see suggestive and even brilliant thought hopelessly befogged by unemphatic and disorderly statement. Still more difficult is it to make people of fine emotions and swift perceptions understand that such qualities are only the basis of authorship, and that the vital necessity for self-expression is to have a knowledge, acquired or instinctive, of the extremely symbolical and even traditional methods and processes of representation. Vivid life is not the same thing as vivid art; art is a sort of recondite and narrow symbolism, by which the word, the phrase, the salient touch, represents, suggests, hints the larger vision. It is in the reducing of broad effects to minute effects that the mastery of art lies.

Good work has often been done for the sake of money; I could name some effective living writers who never willingly put pen to paper, and would be quite content to express themselves in familiar talk, or even to live in vivid reflection, if they were not compelled to earn their living. Ambition will do something to mold an artist; the philanthropic motive may put some wind into his sails, but by itself it has little artistic value. Speaking for myself, in so far as it is possible to disentangle complex motives, the originating impulse has never been with me pecuniary, or ambitious, or philanthropic, or even communicative. It has been simply and solely the intense pleasure of putting as emphatically and beautifully and appropriately as possible into words, an idea of a definite kind. The creative impulse is not like any other that I know; some thought, scene, picture, darts spontaneously into the mind. The intelligence instantly sets to work arranging, subdividing, foreseeing, extending, amplifying. Much is done by some unconscious cerebration; for I have often planned the development of a thought in a few minutes, and then dropped it; yet an hour or two later the whole thing seems ready to be written.

Moreover, the actual start is a pleasure so keen and delightful as to have an almost physical and sensuous joy about it. The very act of writing has become so mechanical that there is nothing in the least fatiguing about it, though I have heard some writers say otherwise; while the process is actually going on, one loses all count of time and place; the clock on the mantelpiece seems to leap miraculously forward; while the mind knows exactly when to desist, so that the leaving off is like the turning of a tap, the stream being instantaneously cut off. I do not recollect having ever forced myself to write, except under the stress of illness, nor do I ever recollect its being anything but the purest pleasure from beginning to end.

In saying this I know that I am confessing myself to be a frank *improvisatore;* and where such art fails, as mine often fails, is in a lack of the power of concentration and revision, which is the last and greatest necessity of high art. But I owe to it the happiest and brightest experiences of life, to which no other pleasure is even dimly comparable. Easy writing, it is said, makes hard reading; but is it true that hard writing ever makes easy reading?

The end of the matter would seem to be that if

the creative impulse is very strong in a man it will probably find its way out. If ordinary routine-work destroys it, it is probably not very robust; yet authorship is not to be recommended as a profession, because the prizes are few, the way hard, the disappointments poignant and numerous; and though there are perhaps few greater benefactors to the human race than beautiful and noble writers, yet there are many natures both noble and beautiful who would like to approach life that way, but who, from lack of the complete artistic equipment, from technical deficiencies, from failure in craftsmanship, must find some other way of enriching the blood of the world.

HERB MOLY AND HEARTSEASE

XIV

HERB MOLY AND HEARTSEASE

1

WHEN Odysseus was walking swiftly, with rage in his heart, through the island of Circe, to find out what had befallen his companions, he would have assuredly gone to his doom in the great stone house of the witch, the smoke of which went up among the thickets, if Hermes had not met him.

The God came in the likeness of a beautiful youth with the first down of manhood upon his lips. He chid the much-enduring one for his rash haste, and gave him what we should call not very good advice; but he also gave him something which was worth more than any good advice, a charm which should prevail against the spells of the Nymph, which he might carry in his bosom and be unscathed.

It was an ugly enough herb, a prickly plant which sprawled low in the shadow of the trees.

Its root was black, and it had a milk-white flower; the Gods called it MOLY, and no mortal strength could avail to pull it from the soil; but as Odysseus says, telling the story, "There is nothing which the Gods cannot do"; and it came up easily enough at the touch of the beardless youth. We know how the spell worked, how Odysseus rescued his companions, and how Circe told him the way to the regions of the dead; but even so he did not wholly escape from her evil enchantment!

2

No one knows what the herb Moly really was; some say it was the mandrake, that plant of darkness, which was thought to bear a dreadful resemblance, in its pale swollen stalk and outstretched arms, to a tortured human form, and to utter moans as it was dragged from the soil; but later on it was used as the name for a kind of garlic, employed as a flavoring for highly-spiced salads. The Greeks were not, it seems, very scientific botanists, so far as nomenclature went, and applied any name that was handy to any plant that struck their fancy. They believed, no doubt, that things had secret and intimate names of their own, which

were known perhaps to the Gods, but that men must just call them what they could.

It would be best perhaps to leave the old allegory to speak for itself, because poetical thoughts are often mishandled, and suffer base transformation at the hands of interpreters; but for all that it is a pretty trade to expound things seen in dreams and visions, or obscurely detected out of the corner of the eye in magical places; while the best of really poetical things is that they have a hundred mystical interpretations, none of which is perhaps the right one; because the poet sees things in a flash, and describes his visions, without knowing what they mean, or indeed if they have any meaning at all.

A place like a university, where one alights for an adventure, in the course of a long voyage, is in many ways like the island of Circe. There is the great stone mansion with its shining doors and guarded cloisters. It is a place of many enchantments and various delights. There are mysterious people going to and fro, whose business it is hard to discern: there are plenty of bowls and dishes, and water pleasantly warmed for the bath. Circe herself had a private life of her own, and much

curious information: she was not forever turning people into pigs; and indeed why she did it at all is not easy to discover! It amused her, and she felt more secure perhaps, when her visitors were safely housed, grunting and splashing about together. One must not press an allegory too closely, but in any place where human beings consort, there is always some turning of men into pigs, even if they afterwards resume their shape again, and shed tears of relief at the change.

3

My purpose here is to speculate a little upon what the herb Moly can be, how it can be found and used. Hermes, the messenger of the Gods, is always ready to pull it up for any one who really requires it. And just because "the isle," as Shakspere says, "is full of noises — sounds and sweet airs," it is a matter of concern to know which of them "give delight and hurt not," and which of them lead only to manger and sty. My discourse is not planned in a spirit of heavy rectitude, or from any desire to shower good advice about, as from a pepper-pot. Indeed I believe that there are many things in the correct conven-

tional code which are very futile and grotesque; some which are directly hurtful; and further that there are many things quite outside the code which are both fine and beautiful; because the danger of all civilized societies is that the members of it take the prevailing code for granted; do not trouble to think what it means, accept it as the way of life, and walk contentedly enough, like the beetle in the bone, which, as we know, can neither turn nor miss its way.

To fall feebly into the conventions of a place takes away all the joyful spirit of adventure; but the little island set in the ocean, with its loud sea-beaches, its upstanding promontories, its wooded glades, its open spaces, and above all the great house standing among its lawns, is a place of adventure above everything, with unknown forces at work, untamed emotions, swift currents of thought, many choices, strange delights; and then there is the shadowy sea beyond, with all its crested billows rolling in, and other islands looming out beyond the breakers, at which the ship may touch, before it finds its way to the regions of death and silence.

I myself had my own time of adventure, took

ship again, and voyaged far; and now that I have come back again to the little island with all its thickets, I wish to retrace in thought, if I can, some of the adventures which befell me, and what they brought me, and to speak too of adventures which I missed, either out of diffidence or folly. I am not at all sure whether Hermes, whom I certainly encountered, ever gave me a plant of Moly, or, if I did indeed receive it, what use I made of it. But I knew others who certainly had the herb at their hearts, and as certainly others who had not; and I will try and tell what he thinks it is and how it may be found. It is deeply planted, no doubt; its root is as black as death, and its flower as pure as the light; while the leaves are prickly and clinging; it is not a plant for trim gardens, nor to be grown in rows in the furrow; it is hard to come by, and harder still to extract; but having once attained it, the man who bears it knows that there are certain things he cannot do again, and certain spells which henceforth have no power over him; and though it does not deliver him from all dangers, he will not at all events be penned with the regretful swine, that had lost all human attributes except the power of shedding tears.

4

Now I shall drop all allegories for the present, because it is confusing both to writers and readers to be always speaking of two things in terms of each other. And I will say first that when I was at college myself as a young man, I seemed to myself to be forever looking for something which I could not find. It was not always so; there were plenty of contented hours, when one played a game, or sate over the fire afterwards with tea and tobacco, talking about it, or talking about other people — I do not often remember talking about anything else, except on set occasions — or later in the evening some one played a piano not very well, or we sang songs, not very tunefully; or one sate down to work, and got interested, if not in the work itself, at least in doing it well and completely. I am not going to pretend, as elderly men often do with infinite absurdity, that I did no work, and scored off dons and proctors, and broke every rule, and defied God and man, and spent money which I had not got, and lived a generally rake-hell life. There are very few of my friends who did these things, and they have mostly fallen in the race

long ago, leaving a poor and rueful memory behind them. Nor do I see why it is so glorious to pretend to have done such things, especially if one has not done them! I was a sober citizen enough, with plenty of faults and failings; and this is not a tract to convert the wicked, who indeed are providing plenty of materials to effect their own conversion in ways very various and all very uncomfortable! I should like it rather to be read by well-meaning people, who share perhaps the same experience as myself, the experience, as I have said, of searching for something which I could not find. Sometimes in those days, I will make bold to confess, I read a book, or heard an address or sermon, or talked to some interesting and attractive person, and felt suddenly that I was on the track of it; was it something I wanted, or was it something I had lost? I could not tell! But I knew that if I could find it, I should never be in any doubt again how to act or what to choose. It was not a set of rules I wanted — there were rules enough and to spare, some of them made for us, and many which we made for ourselves. We mapped out every part of life which was left unmapped by the dons, and we knew exactly what was correct

and what was not; and oh, how dull much of it was!

But I wanted a motive of some sort, an aim; I wanted to know what I was out for, as we now say. I did not see what the point of much of my work was, or know what my profession was to be; I did not see why I did, for social reasons, so many things which did not interest me, or why I pretended to think them interesting. I would sit, one of half-a-dozen men, the air dim with smoke, telling stories about other people. A—— had had a row with B——, he would not go properly into training, he had lunched before a match off a tumbler of sherry and a cigar, he was too good to be turned out of the team — it was amusing enough, but it certainly was not what I was looking for.

Then one made friends; it dawned upon one suddenly what a charming person C—— was, so original and amusing, so observant; it became a thrilling thing to meet him in the court; one asked him to tea, one talked and told him everything. A week later, one seemed to have got to the end of it; the path came to a stop: there was not much in it, after all, and presently he was rather an ass;

he looked gloomily at one when one met him, but one was off on another chase; this idealizing of people was rather a mistake; the pleasure was in the exploration, and there was very little to explore; it was better to have a comfortable set of friends with no nonsense; and yet that was dull too. That was certainly not the thing one was in search of.

What was it then? One saw it like a cloud-shadow racing over the hill, like a bird upon the wing. The perfect friend could not help one, for his perfections waned and faded. Yet there was certainly something there, singing like a bird in the wood; only when one reached the tree, the bird was gone, and another song was in the air. It seemed then at first sight as if one was in search of an emotion of some kind, and not only a solitary emotion, like that which touched the spirit at the sudden falling of the ripe rose-petals from their stem, or at the sight of the far-off plain, with all its woods and waters framed between the out-running hills, or at the sound of organ-music stealing out of the soaring climbing woodwork with all its golden pipes, on setting foot in the dim and fragrant church; they were all sweet enough, but

the mind turned to some kindred soul at hand with whom it could all be shared; and the recognition of some other presence, visibly beckoning through gesture and form and smiling wide-opened eyes, that seemed the best that could be attained, that nearness and rapture of welcome; and then the moment passed, and that too ebbed away.

It was something more than that! because in bleak solitary pondering moments, there stood up, like a massive buttressed crag, a duty, not born of whispered secrets or of relations, however delicate and awestruck, with other hearts, but a stern uncompromising thing, that seemed a relation with something quite apart from man, a Power swift and vehement and often terrible, to whom one owed an unmistakable fealty in thought and act. Righteousness! That old-fashioned thing on which the Jews, one was taught, set much store, which one had misconceived as something born of piety and ceremony, and which now revealed itself as a force uncompromisingly there, which it was impossible to overlook or to disobey; if one did disobey it, something hurt and wounded cried out faintly in the soul; and so it dawned upon one that this was a force, not only not developed out of

piety and worship, but of which all piety and worship were but the frail vesture, which half veiled and half hampered the massive stride and stroke.

It did not attract or woo; it rather demanded and frightened; but it became clear enough that any inner peace was impossible without it; and little by little one learned to recognize that there was no trace of it in many conventional customs and precepts; those could be slighted and disregarded; but there were still things which the spirit did truly recognize as vices and sins, abominable and defiling, with which no trafficking was possible.

This then was clear; that if one was to find the peace one desired — it was that, it was an untroubled peace, a journey taken with a sense of aim and liberty that one hoped to make — then these were two certain elements; a concurrence with a few great and irresistible prohibitions and positive laws of conduct, though these were far fewer than one had supposed; and next to that, a sense of brotherhood and fellowship with those who seemed to be making their way harmoniously and finely towards the same goal as oneself. To understand and love these spirits, to be understood and loved by them, that was a vital necessity.

But this must be added; that the sense of duty of which I speak, which rose sturdily and fiercely above the shifting forms of life, like a peak above the forest, did not appear at once either desirable or even beautiful. It blocked the view and the way; it forbade one to stray or loiter; but the obedience one reluctantly gave to it came simply from a realization of its strength and of its presence. It stood for an order of some kind, which interfered at many points with one's hopes and desires, but with which one was compelled to make terms, because it could and did strike, pitilessly and even vindictively, if one neglected and transgressed its monitions; and thus the quest became an attempt to find what stood behind it, and to discover if there was any Personality behind it, with which one could link oneself, so as to be conscious of its intentions or its goodwill. Was it a Power that could love and be loved? Or was it only mechanical and soulless, a condition of life, which one might dread and even abhor, but which could not be trifled with?

Because that seemed the secret of all the happiness of life — the meeting, with a sense of intimate security, something warm and breathing, that had

need of me as I of it, that could smile and clasp, foster and pity, admire and adore, and in the embrace of which one could feel one's hope and joy grow and stir by contact and trust. That was what one found in the hearts about one's path; and the wonder was, did some similar chance of embracing, clasping, trusting, and loving that vaster power await one in the dim spaces beyond the fields and homes of earth?

I guessed that it was so, but saw, as in a faint vision, that many harsh events, sorry mischances, blows and wounds and miseries, hated and dreaded and endured, lay between me and that larger Heart. But I perceived at last, with terror and mistrust, that the adventure did indeed lie there; that I should often be disdained and repulsed, untended and unheeded, bitterly disillusioned, shaken out of ease and complacency, but assuredly folded to that greater Heart at last.

5

And then there followed a different phase. Up to the very end of the university period, the same uneasiness continued; then quite suddenly the door opened, one slipped into the world, one found one's

place. There were instantaneously real things to be done, real money to earn, men and women to live with and work with, to conciliate or to resist. A mist rolled away from my eyes. What a fantastic life it had been hitherto, how sheltered, how remote from actuality! I seemed to have been building up a rococo stucco habitation out of whims and fancies, adding a room here and a row of pinnacles there, all utterly bizarre and grotesque. Vague dreams of poetry and art, nothing penetrated or grasped, a phrase here, a fancy there; one's ideal of culture seemed like *Ophelia* in "Hamlet," a distracted nymph stuck all over with flowers and anxious to explain the sentimental value of each; the friendships themselves — they had nothing stable about them either; they were not based upon any common aim, any real mutual concern; they were nothing more than the enshrining of a fugitive charm, the tracking of some bright-eyed fawn or wild-haired dryad to its secret haunt, only to find the bird flown and the nest warm. But now there was little time for fancies; there was a real burden to carry, a genuine task to perform; day after day slipped past, like the furrows in a field seen from some speeding car; the

contented mind, pleasantly wearied at the end of the busy day, heaved a light-hearted sigh of relief, and turned to some recreation with zest and delight. It was not that the quest had been successful; it seemed rather that there was no quest at all, and that it was the joy of daily work that had been the missing factor . . . the weeks melted into months, the months became years.

Meanwhile the earth and air, as well as the comrades and companions of the pilgrimage, were touched with a different light of beauty. The beauty was there and in even fuller measure. The sun in the hot summer days poured down upon the fragrant garden, with all its bright flower-beds, its rose-laden alleys, its terraced walks, its green-shaded avenues; the autumn mists lay blue and faint across the far pastures, and the hill climbed smoothly to its green summit; or the spring came back after the winter silence with all its languor of unfolding life, while bush and covert wove their screens of dense-tapestried foliage, to conceal what mysteries of love and delight! the faces or gestures of those about one took on a new significance, a richer beauty, a larger interest, because one began to guess how experience molded them, by what aims

and hopes they were graven and refined, by what failures they were obliterated and coarsened. But the difference was this, that one was not now forever trying to make these charms one's own, to establish private understandings or mutual relations. It was enough now to observe them as one could, to interpret them, to enjoy them, and to pass by. The acquisitive sense was gone, and one neither claimed nor grasped; one admired and wondered and went forwards. And this again seemed a wholesome balance of thought, for, as the desire to take diminished, the power of interpreting and enjoying grew.

But very gradually a slow shadow began to fall, like the shadow of a great hill that reaches far out over the plain. I passed one day an old churchyard deep in the country, and saw the leaning headstones and the grassy barrows of the dead. A shudder passed through me, a far-off chill, at the thought that it must come to *this* after all; that however rich and intricate and delightful life was — and it was all three — the time would come, perhaps with pain and languid suffering, when one must let all the beautiful threads out of one's hands, and compose oneself, with such fortitude

as one could muster, for the long sleep. And then one called reason to one's aid, and bade her expound the mystery, and say that just as no smallest particle of matter could be disintegrated utterly, or subtracted from the sum of things, so, and with infinitely greater certainty, could no pulse or desire or motion of the spirit be brought to nought. True, the soul lived like a bird in a cage, hopping from perch to perch, slumbering at times, moping dolefully, or uttering its song; but it was even more essentially imperishable than the body that obeyed and enfolded and at last failed it. So said Reason; and yet that brought no hope, so dear and familiar had life become,— the well-known house, the accustomed walks, the daily work, the forms of friend and comrade. It was just those things that one wanted; and reason could only say that one must indeed leave them and begone, and she could not look forwards nor forecast anything; she could but bid one note the crag-faces and the monstrous ledges of the abyss into which the spirit was forever falling, falling. . . .

Alas, it was there all the time, the sleepless desire to know and to be assured; I had found nothing,

learned nothing; it was all still to seek. I had but just drugged the hunger into repose, beguiled it, hidden it away under habits and work and activities. It was something firmer than work, something even more beautiful than beauty, more satisfying than love that I wanted; and most certainly it was not repose. I had grown to loathe the thought of that, and to shrink back in horror from the dumb slumber of sense and thought. It was energy, life, activity, motion, that I desired; to see and touch and taste all things, not only things sweet and delightful, but every passionate impulse, every fiery sorrow that thrilled and shook the spirit, every design that claimed the loyalty of mankind. I grudged, it seemed, even the slumber that divided day from day; I wanted to be up and doing, struggling, working, loving, hating, resisting, protesting. And even strife and combat seemed a waste of precious time; there was so much to do, to establish, to set right, to cleanse, to invigorate, great designs to be planned and executed, great glories to unfold. Yet sooner or later I was condemned to drop the tools from my willing hand, to stand and survey the unfinished work, and to grieve that I might no longer take my share.

6

It was even thus that the vision came to me, in a dream of the night. I had been reading the story of the isle of Circe, and the thunderous curve of the rolling verse had come marching into the mind as the breakers march into the bay. I dropped the book at last and slept.

Yes, I was in the wood itself; I could see little save undergrowth and great tree-trunks; here and there a glimpse of sky among the towering foliage. The thicket was less dense to the left, I thought, and in a moment I came out upon an open space, and saw a young man in the garb of a shepherd, a looped blue tunic, with a hat tossed back upon the shoulders and held there by a cord. He had leaned a metal stave against a tree, the top of it adorned by a device of crossed wings. He was stooping down and disengaging something from the earth, so that when I drew near, he had taken it up and was gazing curiously at it. It was the herb itself! I saw the prickly flat leaves, the black root and the little stars of milk-white bloom. He looked up at me with a smile as though he had expected me, which showed his small white teeth

and the shapely curl of his lips; while his dark hair fell in a cluster over his brow.

"There!" he said, "take it! It is what you are in need of!"

"Yes," I said, "I want peace, sure enough!" He looked at me for a moment, and then let the herb drop upon the ground.

"Ah no!" he said lightly, "it will not bring you that; it does not give peace, the herb of patience!"

"Well, I will take it," I said, stooping down; but he planted his foot upon it. "See," he said, "it has already rooted itself!" And then I saw that the black root had pierced the ground, and that the fibers were insinuating themselves into the soil. I clutched at it, but it was firm.

"You do not want it, after all," he said. "You want heartsease, I suppose? That is a different flower — it grows upon men's graves."

"No," I cried out petulantly, like a child. "I do not want heartsease! That is for those who are tired, and I am not tired!"

He smiled at me and stooped again, raised the plant and gave it to me. It had a fresh sharp fragrance of the woodland and blowing winds, but the thorns pricked my hands. . . .

The dream was gone; and I awoke; lying there, trying to recover the thing which I had seen, I heard the first faint piping of the birds begin in the ivy round my windows, as they woke drowsily and contentedly to life and work. The truth flashed upon me, in one of those sudden lightning-blazes that seem to obliterate even thought.

"Yes," I cried to myself, "that is the secret! It is that life does not end; it goes on. To find what I am in search of, to understand, to interpret, to see clearly, to sum it up, that would be an end, a soft closing of the book, the shutting of the door — and that is just what I do not want. I want to live, and endure, and suffer, and experience, and love, and *not* to understand. It is life continuous, unfolding, expanding, developing, with new delights, new sorrows, new pains, new losses, that I need: and whether we know that we need it, or think we need something else, it is all the same; for we cannot escape from life, however reluctant or sick or crushed or despairing we may be. It waits for us until we have done groaning and bleeding, and we must rise up again and live. Even if we die, even if we seek death for ourselves, it is useless. The eye may close, the tide of un-

consciousness may flow in, the huddled limbs may tumble prone; a moment, and then life begins again; we have but flown like the bird from one tree to another. There is no end and no release; it is our destiny to live; the darkness is all about us, but we are the light, enlacing it with struggling beams, piercing it with fiery spears. The darkness cannot quench it, and wherever the light goes, there it is light. The herb Moly is but the patience to endure, whether we like it or no. It delivers us, not from ourselves, not from our pains or our delights, but only from our fears. They are the only unreal things, because we are of the indomitable essence of light and movement, and we cannot be overcome nor extinguished — we can but suffer, we cannot die; we leap across the nether night; we pass resistless on our way from star to star."

BEHOLD, THIS DREAMER COMETH

XV

BEHOLD, THIS DREAMER COMETH

I SAW in one of the daily illustrated papers the other day a little picture — a snapshot from the front — which filled me with a curious emotion. It was taken in some village behind the German lines. A handsome, upright boy of about seventeen, holding an accordion under his arm — a wandering Russian minstrel, says the comment — has been brought before a fat, elderly, Landsturm officer to be interrogated. The officer towers up, in a spiked helmet, holding his sword-hilt in one hand and field-glasses in the other, looking down at the boy truculently and fiercely. Another officer stands by smiling. The boy himself is gazing up, nervous and frightened, staring at his formidable captor, a peasant beside him, also looking agitated. There is nothing to indicate what happened, but I hope they let the boy go! The officer seemed to me to typify the tyranny of

human aggressiveness, at its stupidest and ugliest. The boy, graceful, appealing, harmless, appeared, I thought, to stand for the spirit of beauty, which wanders about the world, lost in its own dreams, and liable to be called sharply to account when it strays within the reach of human aggressiveness occupied in the congenial task of making havoc of the world's peaceful labors.

The Landsturm officer in the picture had so obviously the best of it; he was thoroughly enjoying his own formidableness; while the boy had the look of an innocent, bright-eyed creature caught in a trap, and wondering miserably what harm it could have done.

Something of the same kind is always going on all the world over; the collision of the barbarous and disciplined forces of life with the beauty-loving, detached instinct of man. The latter cannot give a reason for its existence, and yet I am by no means sure that it is not going to triumph in the end.

There is every reason to believe that within the last twenty years the sowing of education broadcast has had an effect upon the human outlook, rather than perhaps upon the human character,

which has not been adequately estimated. The crop is growing up all about us, and we hardly yet know what it is. I am going to speak of one out of the many results of this upon one particular section of the community, because I have become personally aware of it in certain very definite ways. It is easy to generalize about tendencies, but I am here speaking from actual evidence of an unmistakable kind.

The section of the community of which I speak is that which can be roughly described as the middle class — homes, that is, which are removed from the urgent, daily pressure of wage-earning; homes where there is a certain security of outlook, of varying wealth, with professional occupation in the background; homes in which there is some leisure; and some possibility of stimulating, by reading, by talk, by societies, an interest in ideas. It is not a tough, intellectual interest, but it ends in a very definite desire to idealize life a little, to harmonize it, to give color to it, to speculate about it, to lift it out of the region of immediate, practical needs, to try experiments, to live on definite lines, with a definite aim in sight — that aim being to enlarge, to adorn, to enrich life.

I am perfectly sure that this instinct is greatly on the increase; but the significant thing about it is this, that whereas formerly religion supplied to a great extent the poetry and inspiration of life for such households, there is now a desire for something as well of a more definitely artistic kind; to put it simply, I believe that more people are in search of beauty, in the largest sense. This instinct does not run counter to religion at all, but it is an impulse not only towards a rather grim and rigid conception of righteousness, but towards a wider appreciation of the quality of life, its interest, its grace, its fineness, and its fullness.

I am always sorry when I hear people talking about art as if it were a rather easy and not very useful profession, when as a matter of fact art is one of the sharp, swordlike things, like religion and patriotism, which run through life, and divide it, and separate people, and make men and women misunderstand each other. Art means a temperament, and a method, and a point-of-view, and a way of living. There are accomplished people who believe in art and talk about it and even practise it, who do not understand what it is; while there are people who know nothing about what is technically

called art, who are yet wholly and entirely artistic in all that they do or think. Those who have not got the instinct of art are wholly incapable of understanding what those who have got the instinct are about; while those who possess it recognize very quickly others who possess it, and are quite incapable of explaining what it is to those who do not understand it.

I am going to make an attempt in this essay to explain what I believe it to be, not because I hope to make it plain to those who do not comprehend it. They will only think this all a fanciful sort of nonsense: and I would say in passing that whenever in this world one comes across people who talk what appears to be fantastic nonsense, and who yet obviously understand each other and sympathize with each other, one may take for granted that one is in the presence of one of the hidden mysteries, and that if one does not understand, it is because one does not see or hear something which is perfectly plain to those who describe it. It is impossible to do a more stupid thing than to fulminate against secrets which one does not know, and say that "it stands to reason" that they cannot be true. The belief that one has all the ex-

perience worth having is an almost certain sign that one ranks low in the scale of humanity!

But what I do hope is that I may make the matter a little plainer to people who do partly understand it, and would like to understand it better; because art is a very big thing, and if it is even dimly understood, it can add much significance and happiness to life. Every one must recognize the happiness which radiates from the people who have a definite point-of-view and a definite aim. They do not always make other people happy, but there is never any doubt about their own happiness; and when one meets them and parts company with them, it is impossible to think of them as lapsing into any dreariness or depression; they are obviously going back to comfortable schemes and businesses of their own; and we know that whenever we meet them, we shall have just that half-envious feeling that they know their own mind, never want to be interested or amused, but are always occupied in something that continues to interest them, even if they are ill or unfortunate.

To be happy, we all need a certain tenacity and continuity of aim and view; and I would like to persuade people who are only half-aware of it, that

they have a power which they could use if they would, and which they would be happier for using. For the best of the art of which I speak is that it does not need rare experiences of expensive materials to apply it, but can be applied to commonplace and quiet ways of life just as easily as to exciting and exceptional circumstances.

Let me say then that art, as a method and a point-of-view, has not necessarily anything whatever to do with poetry or painting or music. Those are all manifestations of it in certain regions; but what it consists in, to put it as simply as I can, is in the perception and comparison of quality. If that sounds a heavy sort of formula, it is because all formulas sound dull. But the faculty of which I am speaking is that which observes closely all that happens or exists within range — the sky, the earth, the trees, the fields, the streets, the houses, the people; and then it goes further and observes not only what people look like, but how they move and speak and think; and then we come down to smaller things still, to animals and flowers, to the color and shape of things of common use, furniture and tools, everything which is used in ordinary life.

Now every one of these things has a certain quality — of suitability or unsuitability, of proportion or disproportion. Let me take a few quite random instances. Look at a spade, for instance. The sensible man proceeds to call it a spade, and thinks he has done all that is necessary; the wise man considers what length of experience and practice has gone to make it perfectly adapted for its purpose, its length and size, the ledge for the foot to rest on, the hole for the fingers to pass through as they clasp it; all the tools and utensils of men are human documents of far-reaching interest. Or take the strange shapes and colors of flowers, the snapdragon with its blunt lips, the nasturtium with its round flat leaves and flaming horns — they are endless in variety, but all expressing something not only quite definite, but remotely inherited. Or take houses — how perfectly simple and graceful an old homestead can be, how frightfully pretentious and vulgar the speculative builder's work often is, how full of beauty both of form and color almost all the houses in certain parts of the country are, as in the Cotswolds, where the soft stone has tempted builders to try experiments, and to touch up a plain front with a little delicate and well-

placed ornament. Or take the aspect of men, women, and children; how attractive some cannot help being, whatever they do, how helplessly unattractive and uninteresting others can be, and yet how, even so, a fine and sweet nature can make beautiful the plainest and ungainliest of faces. And then in a further region still there are the thoughts and habits and prejudices of people, all wholly distinct, some beautiful and desirable and others unpleasant and even intolerable.

I could multiply instances indefinitely; but my point is that art in the largest sense is or can be concerned with observing and comparing all these separate qualities, wherever they appear. Of course every one's observation does not extend to everything. There are some people who are wholly unobservant, let us say, of scenery or houses, who are yet very shrewd judges of character.

It is not only the beauty of things that one may observe; they may be dreary, hideous, even horrible. The interest of quality does not by any means depend upon its beauty. The point is whether it is strongly and markedly itself. What could be more crammed with quality than an enormous old pig, with its bristles, its elephantine ears, its furtive

little eyes, its twitching snout? What a look it has of a fallen creature, puzzled by its own uncleanliness and yet unable to devise any way out!

All this is only to show that life wherever it is lived affords a rich harvest for eye and mind. And if one dives but a very little way beneath the surface, one is instantly in the presence of the darkest and deepest of mysteries. Who set this all going and why? Whose idea is it all? What is it all driving at? What is the meaning of our being set down here, in our own particular shape, feeling entirely distinct from it all, with very little idea what our place in it is or what we are intended to do? and above all that strange sense that we cannot be compelled to do anything unless we choose — a sense which remains with us, even though day after day and all day long we are doing things that we would not choose to do, if we could help it.

The whole thing indeed is so strange as to be almost frightening, the moment that we dare to think at all: and yet we feel on the whole at our ease in it, and in our place; and the one thing that does terrify us is the prospect of leaving it.

What I mean then by art in its largest sense is the faculty we have of observing and comparing

and wondering; and the people who make the most of life are the people who give their imagination wings; and then, too, comes in the further feeling, which leads us to try and shape our own life and conduct on the lines of what we admire and think beautiful; the dull word duty means that, that we choose what is not necessarily pleasant because for some mysterious reason we feel happier so; because however much we may pretend to think otherwise, we are all of us at every moment intent upon happiness, which is a very different thing from pleasure, and sometimes quite contrary to it.

And so we come at last to the art of living, which is really a very delicate balancing and comparing of reasons, an attempt however blind and feeble to get at happiness; and the moment that this attempt ceases and becomes merely a dull desire to be as comfortable as we can, that moment the spirit begins to go down hill, and the value of life is over; unless perhaps we learn that we cannot afford to go down hill, and that every backward step will have to be painfully retraced, somewhere or other.

What then I would try to persuade any one who is listening to me is that we must use our wills somehow to try experiments, to observe, to dis-

tinguish, to follow what we think fine and beautiful. It may be said that this is only a sort of religion, and indeed it is exactly that at which I am aiming. It *is* a religion, which is within the reach of many people who cannot be touched by what is technically called religion. Religion is a word that has unhappily become specialized. It stands for beliefs, doctrines, ceremonies, practices. But these may not, and indeed do not, suit many of us. The worst of definite religions is that they are too definite. They try to enforce upon us a belief in things which we find incredible, or perhaps think to be simply unknowable; or they make out certain practices to be important, which we do not think important. We must never do violence to our minds and souls by professing to believe what we do not believe, or to think things certain which we honestly believe to be uncertain; but at the same time we must remember that there is always something of beauty inside every religion, because religion involves a deliberate choice of better motives and better actions, and an attempt to exclude the baser and viler elements of life.

Of course the objection to all this — and it is a serious one — is that people may say, "Of course

I see the truth of all that, and the advantage of being actively and vividly interested in life; you might as well preach the advantage of being happy; but my own interest is fitful and occasional; sometimes for days together I have no sense of the interest or quality of anything. I have no time, I have no one to enjoy these things with. How am I to become what I see it would be wise to be?" It is as when the woman of Samaria said, "Thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep!" It is true that civilization does seem more and more to create men and women with these instincts, and to set them in circumstances where it is hard to gratify them. And then such people are apt to say, "Is it after all worth while to aim at so impossible a standard? Is it not better just to put it all aside, and make oneself as comfortable as one can?" And that is the practical answer which a good many people do make to the question; and when such people get older, they are the most discouraging of all advisers, because they ridicule the whole thing as nonsense, which young men and young women had better get out of their heads as soon as they can; as Jowett wrote of his pupil Swinburne, that he was a clever fellow, and would do

well enough as soon as he had got rid of all this poetry and nonsense. I feel no doubt that these ideas, this kind of interest in life, in the wonder and strangeness of it, can be pursued by many who do not pursue it. It is like the white deer, which in the old stories the huntsman was forever pursuing in the forest; he did not ever catch it, but the pursuit of it brought him many high adventures.

Of course it is far easier if one has a friend who share the same tastes; but if one has not, there are always books, in which the best minds can be found thinking and talking at their finest and liveliest. But here again a good many people are betrayed by reading books as one may collect stamps, just triumphing in the number and variety of the repertory. I believe very little in setting the foot on books, as sailors take possession of an unknown isle. One must make experiments, just to see what are the kind of books which nurture and sustain one; and then I believe in arriving at a circle of books, which one really knows through and through, and reads at all time and all moods, till they get soaked and enriched with all sorts of moods and associations. I have a dozen such, which I read and mark and scribble in, write when and

where I read them, and who were my companions. Of course the same books do not always last through one's course. You grow out of books as you grow out of clothes; and I sometimes look at old favorites, and find myself lost in wonder as to how I can ever have cared for them like that! They seem now like little antechambers and corridors, through which I have passed to something far more noble and gracious. But all the time we must be trying to weave the books really into life, not let them stand like ornaments on a shelf. It is poetry that enkindles the mind most to dwell in the thoughts of which I have been speaking. But it must not be read straight on; it must rather be tasted, brooded over, repeated, learned by heart. Let me take a personal instance. As a boy I had no opinion of Wordsworth, except that I admired one or two of the great poems like the "Ode on the Intimation of Immortality" and the "Ode to Duty," which no one who sets out to love poetry at all can afford to ignore. Then, as I grew older, I began to see that quotations from Wordsworth had a sort of grandeur in their very substance, which was unlike any other grandeur. And then I took the whole of the poems away for a vacation and worked at

them; and then I found how again and again Wordsworth touches a thought to life, which is like the little objects you pick up on the seashore, the evidence of another life close at hand, indubitably there, and yet unknown, which is being lived under the waste of waters. When Wordsworth says such things as

> And many love me, but by none
> Am I enough beloved,

or when he says

> Some silent laws our hearts may make
> Which they shall long obey —

then he seems to uncover the very secrets of the world, and to speak as when in the prophet's vision the seven thunders uttered their voices. Only today I was working with a pupil; in his essay he had quoted Wordsworth, and we looked up the place. While I was speaking, my eye fell upon "The Poet's Epitaph" and I saw,

> Come hither in thy hour of strength,
> Come, weak as is a breaking wave!

Those two lines of unutterable magic; he could not

understand why I stopped and faltered, nor could I have explained it to him. But it was as Coleridge says,

> Weave a circle round him thrice,
> And close your eyes in holy dread,
> For he on honey-dew hath fed,
> And drunk the milk of paradise.

It is just a mystery of beauty that has been seen, not to be explained or understood.

Of course there are people, there will be people, who will read what I have just written in an agony of rationality, and say that it is all rubbish. But I am describing an experience of ecstasy which is not very common perhaps; but just as real an experience as eating or drinking. I have had the experience before. I shall have it again: I recognize it at once, and it is quite distinct from other experiences. One cannot sit down to it as regularly as one sits down to a meal, of course. It is not a thing to be proud of, because I have had it as far back as I can remember. Nor am I at all sure what the effect of it is. It does not transfigure life except for the moment; and if I were in a dull frame of mind, it might not visit me at all,

though it is very apt to come if I am in a sad or anxious frame of mind.

Then how do I interpret it? Very simply indeed; that there is a region which I will call the region of beauty, to which the view of life that I have called art does sometimes undoubtedly admit one; though as I have also said the view of which I speak is concerned with many perceptions which are not beautiful, and even sometimes quite the opposite.

If I were frankly asked whether it is worth while trying to think or imagine or thrust oneself into this particular kind of rapture, I should say, "Certainly not!" It is very doubtful if it could be genuinely attained unless it has been already experienced; and I do not believe in the wholesomeness of self-suggested emotions.

But I do believe most firmly that it is worth while for any one who is interested in such effects at all to try experiments, by looking at things critically, hearing things, observing, listening to other people, reading books, trying in fact to practise observation and judgment.

I was visiting some printing works the other day. The great cylinders were revolving, the wheels

buzzing, the levers clicking. A boy perched on a platform by the huge machine lightly disengaged a sheet of paper; it was drawn in, and a moment after a thing like a gridiron flew up, made a sort of bow, and deposited a printed sheet in a box, the sides of which kept moving, so as to pat the papers into one solid pad.

I came away with the master-printer, and asked him idly whether the boy knew what book he was printing. He laughed. "No," he said, "and the less he is interested the better — his business is just to feed the machine, and it becomes entirely mechanical." I felt a kind of shame at the thought of a human being becoming so entirely and completely a machine; but the boy looked cheerful, well and intelligent, and as if he had a very decisive little life of his own quite apart from the whizzing engine, forever bowing over and putting a new sheet in the box.

But it is just that dull and mechanical handling of life which I believe we ought to avoid. It is harder to avoid it for some people than for others, and it is more difficult to escape from under certain conditions. But all art and all artistic perception is just a sign of the irresponsible and irrepressible

joy of life, and an attempt, as I said at first, to perceive and distinguish and compare the quality of things. What I am here maintaining is that art is not necessarily the production of something artistic; that is the same impulse only when it rises in the heart of an inventive, accomplished, deft-fingered, eager-minded craftsman. If a man or a woman has a special gift of words, or a mastery of form and color, or musical phrases, the passion for beauty is bound to show itself in the making of beautiful things — and such lives are among the happiest that a man can live, though there is always the shadow of realizing the beauty that is out of reach, that cannot be captured or expressed. And if it could be captured and expressed, the quest would vanish!

But there are innumerable hearts and minds which have the perception of quality, though not the power of expressing it; and these are the people whom I wish to persuade of the fact that they hold in their hands a thread, which, like the clue in the old story, can conduct a searcher safely through the dark recesses of the great labyrinth. He tied it, the dauntless youth in the tale, to the ancient thorn-tree that grew by the cavern's mouth; and

then he stepped boldly in, and let it unwind within his hand.

For many people, indeed for all people who have any part in the future of the world, the clue of life must be found in beauty of some kind or another; not necessarily in the outward beauties of colors, sounds, and words, but in the beauty of conduct, in the kind, sweet-tempered, pure, unselfish life. Those who choose such qualities do so simply because they seem more beautiful than the spiteful, angry, greedy, selfish life. There is a horror of ugliness about that; and thus beauty of every kind is of the nature of a signal to us from some mighty power behind and in the world. Evil, ugly, hateful, base things are strong indeed; but no peace, no happiness, lies in that direction. It is just that power of distinguishing, of choosing, of worshiping the beautiful quality, which has done for the world all that has ever been done to improve it; and to follow it is to take the side of the power, whatever it may be, that is trying to help and guide the world out of confusion and darkness and strife into light and peace. It may be gratefully admitted, of course, that religion is one of the foremost influences in this great movement; but it also

needs to be said that religion, by connecting itself so definitely as it does with ecclesiastical life, and ceremony, and theological doctrine, has become a specialized thing, and does not meet all the desires of the heart. It is not every one who finds full satisfaction for all the visions of the mind and soul in a church organization. Some people, and those neither wicked nor heartless nor unsympathetic, find a real dreariness in systematized religion, with its conventional beliefs, its narrow instruction, its catechizings, missionary meetings, gatherings, devotions, services. It may be all true enough in a sense, but it often leaves the sense of beauty and interest and emotion and poetry unfed; it does not represent the fullness of life. The people who are dissatisfied with it all are often dumbly ashamed of their dissatisfaction; but yet it does not feed the heart; the kind of heaven that they are taught awaits them is not a place that they recognize as beautiful or desirable. They do not want to do wrong, or to rebel against morality at all, but they have impulses which do not seem to be recognized by technical religion, adventure, friendship, passion, beauty, the strange and wonderful emotions of life. The work of great poets and artists

and musicians, the lovely scenes of earth, these seem to have no place inside systematic religion, to be things rather timorously permitted, excused, and apologized for. Men need something richer, freer, and larger. They do not want to shirk their duty or to follow evil; but many things seem to be insisted upon by religion as important which seem unimportant, many beliefs spoken of as true which seem at best uncertain. It is not that such people are disloyal to God and to virtue, but they feel stifled and confined in an atmosphere which dares not attribute to God many of the finest and sweetest things in the world.

Such a feeling is not so much a rebellion against old ideas, as a new wine which is too strong for the old bottles; it is a desire to extend the range of ideals, to find more things divine.

I do not believe that this instinct is going to be crushed or overcome; I believe it will grow and spread, and play an immense part in the civilization of the future. I hope indeed that religion will open its arms to meet it, because the spirit of which I speak is in the truest sense religious; since it is concerned with purifying and enriching life, and in living life, not on base or mean lines, but with

constant reference to the message of a Power which is forever reminding us that life is full of fire and music, great, free and wonderful. That is the meaning of it all, an increased sense of the largeness and richness of life, which refuses to be bound inside a gloomy, sad, suspicious outlook. It is all an attempt to trust God more rather than less, and to recognize the worth of life in wider and wider circles.

"Behold this dreamer cometh," said Joseph's envious brethren, when they saw him afar off; "we shall see what will become of his dreams!" They conspired to slay him, they sold him into slavery. Yet the day was to come when they stood trembling before him, and when he freely forgave them and royally entertained them. We can never afford to despise or deride dreams, because they are what men live by; they come true, they bring a great deliverance with them.

THE END

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